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# NORTHEASTERN ILLINOIS REGIONAL GREENWAYS PLAN

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THE NORTHEASTERN ILLINOIS PLANNING COMMISSION  
AND OPENLANDS PROJECT

With funding from

*the Illinois Department of Conservation,*

*with additional support from*

*the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation*

*and The Conservation Fund*

Adopted by NIPC September 17, 1992

**Northeastern Illinois** is diverse in its land use and complex in its political structure. It has some of the most productive farms on earth—also one of the world's greatest cities. It contains 3,714 square miles of land and 38 square miles of water. It is home to 7 million people, organized in more than 1,250 units of government.

In 1957, following a decade of rapid urbanization in the Chicago suburban area, the Illinois General Assembly created the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission (NIPC) to conduct comprehensive planning for the six-county greater Chicago region.

The Commission has three statutory charges: conduct research and collect data for planning; assist local government; and prepare comprehensive plans and policies to guide the development of the counties of Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry and Will.

By necessity, regional planning deals with general development policies not local land use detail, NIPC supports and coordinates county and municipal planning. The Commission has advisory powers only and relies upon voluntary compliance with its plans and policies.



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# NORTHEASTERN ILLINOIS REGIONAL GREENWAYS PLAN



DEVELOPED BY  
THE NORTHEASTERN ILLINOIS PLANNING COMMISSION  
AND OPENLANDS PROJECT



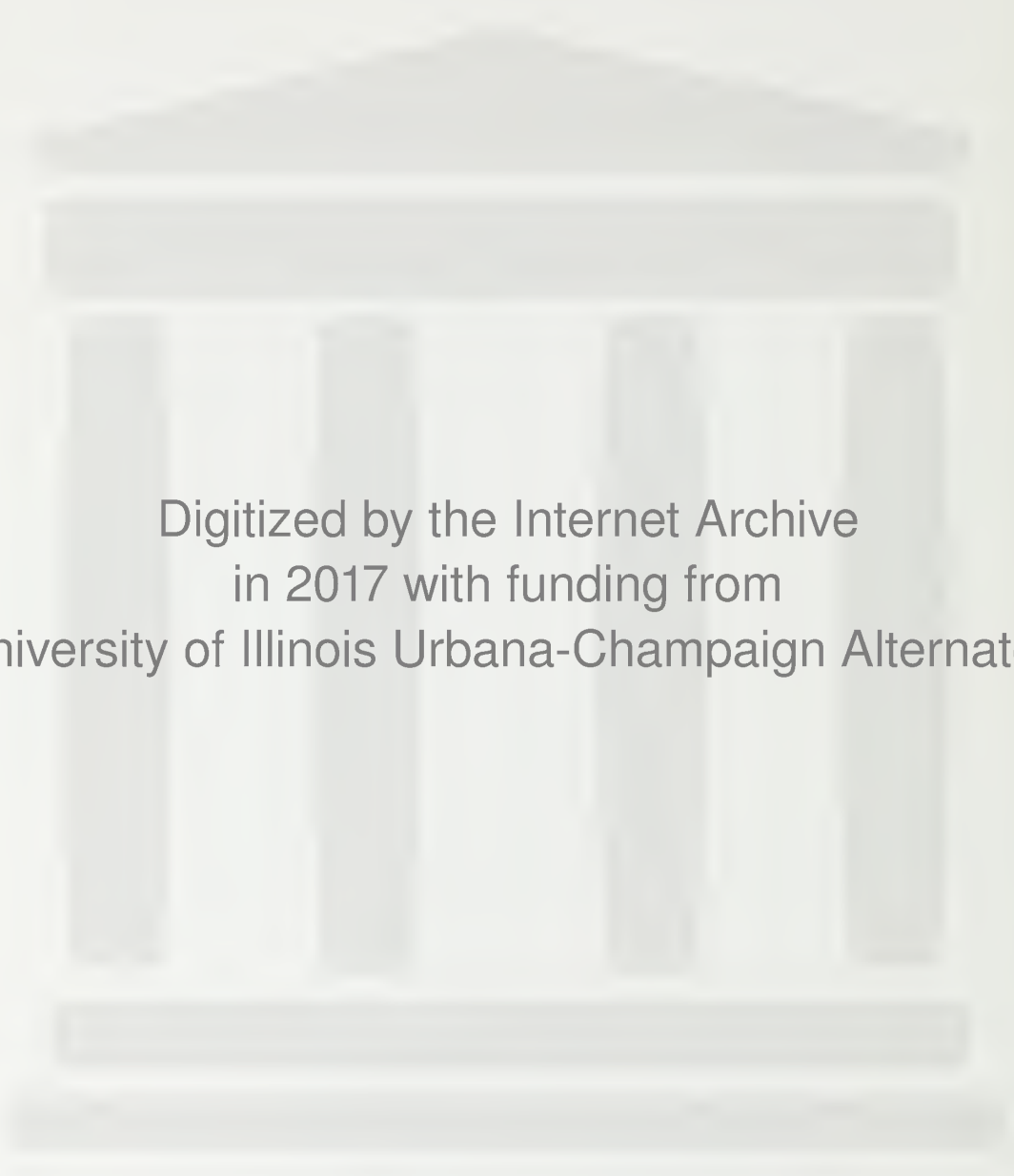
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Adopted by NIPC September 17, 1992

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# northeastern illinois planning commission

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May 1993

To the Public Officials and Citizens of Northeastern Illinois:

On behalf of the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission, it is my pleasure to submit to you for your consideration the *Northeastern Illinois Regional Greenways Plan*. The Greenways Plan was developed in cooperation with Openlands Project and with the assistance of many of the county and local open space jurisdictions, state and federal agencies, intergovernmental organizations, and citizens of northeastern Illinois. Their invaluable contribution is greatly appreciated by the Commission.

The Greenways Plan creates a vision for an interconnected region-wide network of linear open spaces that will provide many benefits to northeastern Illinois--environmental, recreational, economic, aesthetic, and even transportation via trails and walkways. Thus the regional greenway network is a critical component of our regional open space "infrastructure."

The Plan is intended to provide greenway benefits to rural, suburban, and urban parts of the region. Given the pace of growth, it is imperative that the region work diligently to preserve greenway opportunities and at the same time undertake greenway development and restoration in previously developed areas.

Commission authority to prepare and make recommendations to units of local government is found in the Northeastern Illinois Planning Act, Chapter 70 of the Illinois Compiled Statutes. This Plan is advisory in nature. Therefore we look to you, the public officials and citizens of the region, to take up the challenge of making the plan a reality.

Sincerely,

Donna P. Schiller  
President



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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

THE NORTHEASTERN ILLINOIS PLANNING COMMISSION (NIPC) was created in 1957 by the Illinois General Assembly to be the advisory comprehensive planning agency for the six-county Chicago metropolitan area. The Northeastern Illinois Planning Act gave the Commission three charges: to conduct research and collect data for planning; to advise and assist local government; and to prepare comprehensive plans and policies to guide the development of the counties of Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry and Will.

OPENLANDS PROJECT is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to improving life in northeastern Illinois by increasing the amount and enhancing the quality of open space. Since its founding in 1963, Openlands Project has helped to protect more than 20,000 acres of land.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS: The *Northeastern Illinois Regional Greenways Plan* was developed with the help of staff at the Illinois Department of Conservation, the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission, the Forest Preserve District of Cook County, the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County, the Forest Preserve District of Kane County, the Lake County Forest Preserve District, the McHenry County Conservation District, the Forest Preserve District of Will County, and many county, municipal and park district staff members and citizens.

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# FOREWORD THE GREENWAY VISION

*"I hope that [counties and municipalities] will understand that the benefits are not just for bikers and birders, or for wildlife, but for everyone who takes pleasure in a green landscape, or who cares about cleaner water and air, or who simply wants to see an end to the costs and damages of flooding."*

Barbara Marquardt  
Fox Valley Land Foundation  
Public Hearing Testimony

## The Need for Action

In the last twenty years, the population in northeastern Illinois has grown an estimated four percent. That's modest. During that same period, the region's developed areas has expanded by at least forty-five percent. That's astronomical.

The evaporation of undeveloped land is a call to action for those who believe that access to open space — parks and vistas and wildlife preserves — adds an irreplaceable ingredient to the quality of life in northeastern Illinois.

## The Plan

Rather than ask individual counties and park districts to undertake a catch-as-catch-can approach to preserving open lands, two Illinois-based groups have collaborated on an overarching, regional plan that offers a strategic approach to saving open space. The Northeastern Illinois Regional Greenways Plan focuses not so much on securing broad parts of land as on creating a network of long corridors — or "greenways" — that will string together the region's precious preserves.

## What's a Greenway?

In essence, it's a linear park — a corridor of open land that stitches together swatches of existing open space. Like arteries linking vital organs, greenways

connect parks, forest preserves, wetlands, cultural and historic sites, and communities. Greenways provide a channel for the natural circulation of birds and bugs and seedlings from one wildlife sanctuary to another. Some — though not all — greenways are trails that allow humans passage into and through the natural world. Most greenways follow waterways, deserted railroads, marshy wetlands, or urban streets, providing long ribbons of open space.

Perhaps northeastern Illinois' most famous greenway is Chicago's protected lakefront. Another premier example is the Illinois Prairie Path, one of the nation's oldest "rails-to-trails" greenway conversions.

These are only a few examples of greenways that are already connecting this region's precious dots of open space. Opportunities to create more connections are abundant. The specific recommendations of the Plan are laid out in detail in Chapters 4 and 5.

## What's the Payoff?

The benefits are many. Greenways provide millions of people with close-to-home access to open lands. They improve a neighborhood's aesthetic and natural appeal. They preserve and incorporate aesthetic sites. Along streams, they offer low-cost protection against

flooding. They protect critical habitat for plants and animals. They enhance water and air quality. They create recreational opportunities for bikers, walkers, runners, families, and provide new routes for self-propelled commuters. They give disadvantaged communities free access to open space. They promote environmental awareness. They encourage and enhance long-range economic development. And they're inexpensive.

Compared to traditional land conservation efforts, the implementation of a greenways plan is a far more cost-effective way to provide communities — be they plant, animal, or human — with access to open space.

### **What Do Other Regions Think of This?**

They like it ... so much that they've already started doing it. A January 8, 1992 *New York Times* article reported that over the last ten years, "... the greenway movements in New York, Washington, Boston, Seattle, and other metropolitan areas have stitched together hundreds of miles of trails through 'left-over land,' including railway lines, swamps, flood plains, former industrial sites and canals." James C. Amon, director of New Jersey's Delaware and Raritan Canal Commission, says, "These are the parks of the future, because suburbanization is the future ... Instead of looking at parks as distant preserves to be visited on special occasions, we are integrating parks right into our own backyards and into our daily lives."

Northeastern Illinois takes pride in being a long-time leader in this national movement, which today has succeeded in touching off state and federal action.

### **What Success Means ...**

The Plan that follows sets out to achieve five goals:

- Create a shared vision of a greenways network in northeastern Illinois
- Help agencies and organizations enact that vision
- Help resolve public/private sector issues that may arise
- Coordinate efforts among various jurisdictions
- Encourage understanding and stewardship of the natural world.

The ultimate goal, of course, is to create a linked network of parks and greenways that runs throughout the region. The more immediate goal is to get northeastern Illinois' decision-makers to adopt this greenways vision and make decisions within their respective jurisdictions that will bring it to life. Without cooperation, success will be impossible. But with cooperation from state agencies, municipalities and counties, park districts and elected officials, suburban developers and urban dwellers, this vision can take root and grow into a ribbon of green that will weave its way throughout the region.



---

*"Whenever we make changes in our surroundings, we can too easily short-change ourselves, by cutting ourselves off from some of the sights and sounds, the shapes or textures, or other information from a place that have helped mold our understanding and are now necessary for us to thrive. Overdevelopment and urban sprawl can damage our own lives as much as they damage our cities and countryside."*

Tony Hiss  
*The Experience of Place*  
1990

*"Green spaces and open lands are what we all look for in proximity to our homes. Such well-planned and preserved areas improve the essential quality of our lives as well as the value of our properties."*

Bradley Cornell  
Citizen — Public Hearing Testimony  
1992



# CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

## USES OF THE PLAN

The Northeastern Illinois Regional Greenways Plan was developed jointly by the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission (NIPC) and Openlands Project with funding from the Illinois Department of Conservation and other sources.

The Plan is directed toward local, regional, state and federal open space and environmental agencies and jurisdictions. It is also intended to be used by other local officials whose decisions could facilitate implementation of the Plan. Finally, it is directed to all those private sector individuals and organizations whose support is needed in creating a better environment and higher quality of life in northeastern Illinois.

### The Plan serves to:

- Create a vision for a regional greenway network and provide a framework for coordinated greenway and trail preservation and development in northeastern Illinois.
- Assist implementing and funding agencies in allocating resources in support of the Plan.
- Initiate a continuing forum for discussion and resolution of greenway issues among governmental jurisdictions and the private sector.
- Provide a basis for coordinating transportation, water quality, storm and flood-

water, and other programs with existing and proposed greenways to advance greenway preservation and reduce conflicts with other development activities.

- Increase the level of understanding regarding the importance and value of greenways and encourage stewardship of natural and cultural resources.

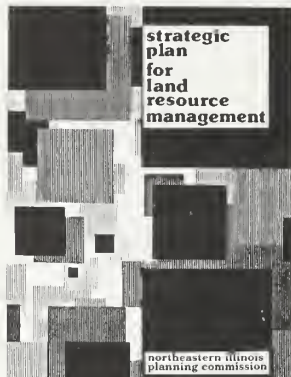
The Greenway Plan is an important element for planning for future growth in northeastern Illinois. It can play an important role in preserving resources and providing recreational opportunities in all parts of the region, including areas that are likely to be developed in the future. However, the greenway plan must be used in conjunction with other growth management tools in order to provide the best possible future land use pattern.

This plan does not obviate the need for comprehensive open space planning at the municipal, county and regional levels. There are many other areas that should be maintained in publicly and privately owned open space and low-intensity uses and that should be designated in county and local open space and land use plans.

This greenway plan is neither a regional bikeway plan nor a comprehensive trail plan. While trails and bikeways may be developed to add recreational benefits to greenways, other trail and bikeway projects not reflected in this plan may be worthy of funding support because they provide local benefits or because they provide recreational or transportation benefits outside of the greenway network.

## A FAMILY OF PLANS

The Northeastern Illinois Regional Greenways Plan is an integral part of a family of regional plans adopted by the Northeastern Illinois Planning



*The "Strategic Plan for Land Resource Management," adopted by the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission in 1992, presents a plan for future regional development.*

Commission and collectively called the Regional Land Resource Management Plan for Northeastern Illinois. This Regional Greenways Plan also complements the Statewide Trails Plan developed by the Illinois Department of Conservation.

Another component of the Regional Land Resource Management Plan is the Strategic Plan for Land Resource Management also adopted by the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission. Implementation of the Strategic Plan will be crucial to the success of the Regional Greenways Plan because it calls for needed improvements in planning, capital improvements programming and intergovernmental coordination which will benefit greenway planning. A number of the relevant recommendations from the Strategic Plan have been reiterated in this document.

## HOW THE PLAN WAS DEVELOPED

The Plan has been the product of a one-year planning program. The planning process was built upon a foundation of regional open space, environmental, infrastructure planning and programming provided by

NIPC and the open space and environmental planning and advocacy expertise of the Openlands Project. NIPC adopted the Regional Open Space and Recreation Policy Plan in 1980, followed by the Regional Land Use Policy Plan with an open space component in 1984.

Openlands Project announced its "21st Century Open Space Plan" initiative in 1990. A private not-for-profit organization founded in 1963, Openlands has an extensive ongoing program in open space advocacy in the Chicago metropolitan area. Openlands is working with citizens, community groups and area governments to create a number of important greenways in northeastern Illinois. Its affiliate organization, CorLands, works directly

### THE 21ST CENTURY OPEN SPACE PLAN.



*"The 21st Century Open Space Plan," developed by Openlands Project in 1991, suggests a planned network of interconnected open spaces that enhance existing parks and preserves.*



with public and private land owners to facilitate open space acquisition and dedication of conservation easements.

Initially, NIPC and Openlands met with the directors of the six forest preserve and conservation districts in northeastern Illinois in preparation for a series of eight planning meetings held in Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will counties and in the city of Chicago. These regional meetings revealed major support for greenway planning and provided an opportunity for conservation agencies to present their open space, greenway and trail plans. The meetings also provided a valuable forum for coordination among local, regional, state and federal jurisdictions and other open space organizations. After the first round of meetings, a draft of the Plan and a map of greenways opportunities were developed. These were reviewed at a second round of meetings which focused on the issues and techniques of the plan's implementation.

Comments from organizations and individuals during the second round of meetings were incorporated by NIPC and Openlands into a revised draft which was released by NIPC for public hearing purposes. The public hearing draft was widely distributed to municipalities, park districts, counties, state and federal agencies, private organizations, and interested citizens. The document was reviewed by NIPC's Recreation and Open Space Technical Advisory Committee (ROSTAC). Public hearings were held by NIPC on August 4, 5, and 6, 1992, after which a final recommended plan was developed and adopted by the Commission on September 17, 1992 and transmitted to the Illinois Department of Conservation.

## THE NEED FOR ACTION

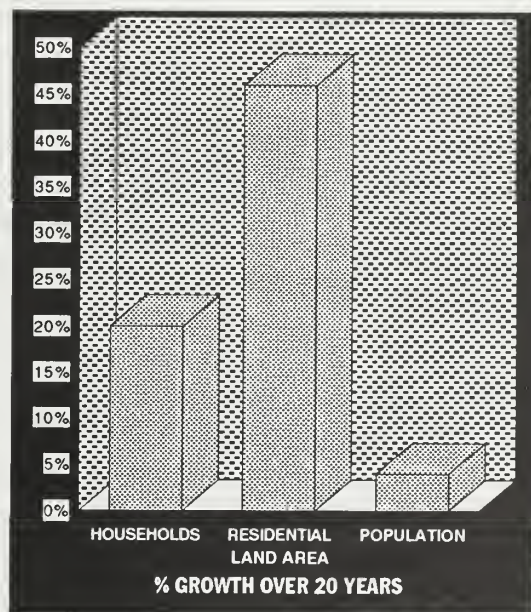
The goals of the Regional Greenway Plan cannot be reached without the concerted efforts of many organizations and individuals. The need for action is urgent, because greenway opportunities are being lost, the needs for greenways are increasing, and the resources available for plan implementation are limited.

Completing the vision also requires making connections to greenways in adjacent counties and states. This includes connecting to both Wisconsin and Indiana, continuing to pursue a program for the Illinois and Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor, continuing the Fox River Greenway along the Lower Fox, and supporting the realization of the national trail system, including the Tecumseh Trail, and Illinois trail system.

## Regional Decentralization Pressures Greenway Resources

The rapid decentralization of development and population in northeastern Illinois increases the urgency with which greenway preservation should be undertaken. During the last twenty years the region's developed area has expanded by at least 45 percent while the population only increased by 4 percent.

**REGIONAL DECENTRALIZATION  
IN NORTHEASTERN ILLINOIS  
BETWEEN 1970 AND 1990**



*While the population in northeastern Illinois has grown only 4 percent over the last 20 years, the percent of residential land area has risen significantly faster, increasing 46 percent between 1970 and 1990.*

As a result, development pressures continue at the suburban “fringe” and greenway opportunities can be easily lost as new development occurs. At the same time, with active open space acquisition programs in the region, less than 10 percent of the region’s area has been put into public open space use.

In areas where the real estate market is strong, pressure intensifies for new development along stream corridors and abandoned rail corridors, and in floodplains, wetlands, and other areas needed for greenway links. Consumer demand for development sites with water access increases development pressures on shoreline areas. Poorly designed development can damage stream habitat, cause flooding, and ruin recreational opportunities.

Abandoned railroad rights-of-way represent a major potential source of greenway land but without adequate legal, administrative and financial resources to preserve them, many opportunities are lost to other land uses.

This Greenway Plan can set a course of action to preserve greenways in advance of future development in growth areas.

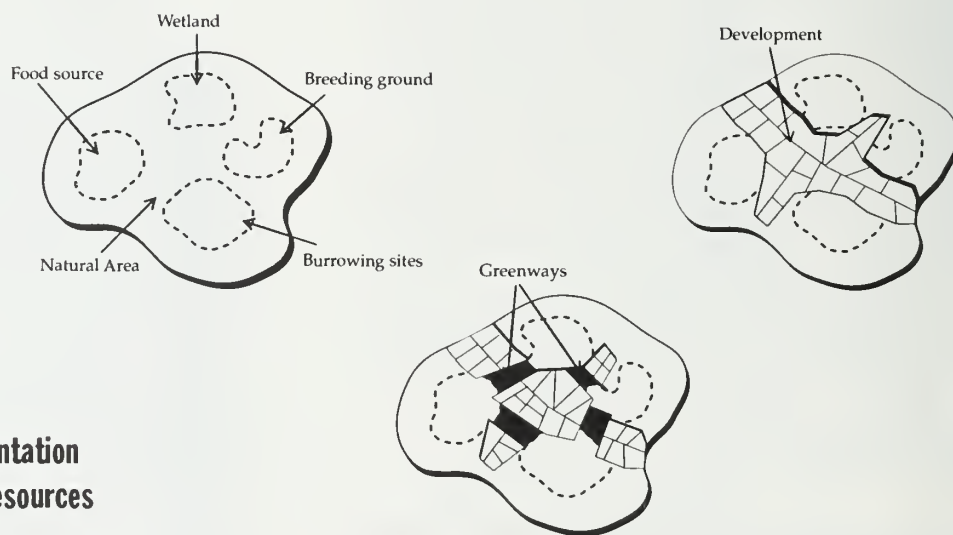
## Environmental Fragmentation Degrades Greenway Resources

The process of decentralization has the corollary impact of fragmenting the natural environment, thereby reducing the continuity that is necessary for the migration and propagation of plant and animal species. Fragmentation also increases the “edge” of habitat areas, which increases the exposure of plants and animals to the impacts of urban development.

Storm and floodwater management problems resulting from inadequate stormwater detention and encroachment of development upon floodplains creates demand for immediate, highly-engineered solutions that are expensive and can result in channelization of segments of streams. Potential greenways can instead become mainly storm and floodwater conduits that eliminate the continuity of the natural environment.

## Loss of Key Environmental Resources

Less than one percent of Illinois’ native habitat remains, as well as less than five percent of the original wetlands area. Protection of these remaining resources is therefore critical. Wetlands and stream corridors contain many of these remaining areas and offer potential for future restoration. These areas are important as habitat for terrestrial and aquatic



*Isolation from habitat:* The figure in the upper left depicts a theoretical area of natural land interspersed with habitats (dotted areas) that a species might use regularly. In the upper right, a development has left important habitat intact, but has prevented animals from utilizing it. Connecting habitat areas with greenways, as in the bottom figure, gives these species greater access to the habitat they require.

Source: "How Greenways Work: A Handbook on Ecology," published by Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program, National Park Service.

Credit: NIPCC



*Stream channelization along St. Joseph Creek. Greenways, with their natural ability to accommodate flood waters, are a low-cost alternative to such highly engineered drainage control measures.*

species, including endangered and threatened species, and also provide flood and stormwater management and water quality improvement.

### **Increasing Demands for Greenway Recreation**

Participation in linear forms of recreation continues to increase, with more and more people enjoying walking, running, bicycling and skating, for example. Some of the region's trail facilities are already very crowded on weekends and holidays. Similarly, people continue to enjoy especially water-oriented recreation, thereby creating a need for improved and expanded shoreline and stream corridor recreation facilities.

Many people have less, rather than more, leisure time, and can enjoy the close-to-home recreation that can be provided in communities within greenways. Often, even in developed communities and neighborhoods, it is possible to find linear space along which to create greenways and provide appropriate recreation facilities.

The ability to provide recreational benefits through greenways is constrained by:

- A lack of connections and continuity within the existing system;
- The inability to make recreational use of existing right-of-way such as highways, transit, and utilities;
- Property owner resistance to land acquisition and trail development programs in certain locations based upon issues relating to the condemnation process, cost to taxpayers, and perceived or anticipated problems relating to security, privacy, and liability;

- The aging and poorly-maintained existing greenway infrastructure in mature and distressed communities which suffers from age, overuse, and a lack of funds for repairs and maintenance.

### **Limited Fiscal Resources of Greenway Providers**

The preservation of greenways by public jurisdictions is becoming increasingly difficult as fiscal resources become more limited and the costs of land acquisition, facility development and maintenance increase. Taxpayers are increasingly concerned about increased property taxes that might result from open space programs, even though greenways are an extremely cost-effective approach to addressing regional resource management and recreation needs and can save tax money in the long run. For example, stream corridors preserved in a natural condition should require less maintenance than highly engineered channelized streams. Currently, open space acquisition programs are constrained by a legislative tax cap in the five collar counties which limits the ability of jurisdictions to issue non-referendum bonds.



## New Incentives and Opportunities from State and Federal Programs

Several major federal and state programs offer new opportunities for encouraging greenway planning and plan implementation. The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA), the new federal transportation act, is allowing for greater state and local-level discretion on the use of transportation funds and is providing significant funding for "enhancements" related to transportation. Such enhancements could include bikeways and trails (especially where built in conjunction with other transportation facilities, such as roads and bridges), pedestrian and bicycle under and over-passes, greenway access facilities related to transportation facilities, and greenway landscaping in transportation rights-of-way. In addition, the amendments to the Clean Air Act require employers to develop plans to reduce employee vehicle trips. This provides impetus for the creation of pedestrian and bikeway-oriented greenways.

Both of these new federal laws focus on the single occupant vehicle as a villain in the overall development pattern in urban areas. Both laws call for land use planning that will result in less auto use and more use of alternative means of travel, with shifts to greater transit use as well as to walking and bicycling.

Operation GreenLight, a multi-agency northeastern Illinois program funded by the Illinois Department of Transportation to alleviate traffic congestion, is another potential support for greenway projects that help to reduce traffic congestion. Likewise, a program administered by the Illinois Department of

Credit: Richard Mariner



Conservation provides funding to local agencies to develop bikeways.

In addition, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services has a new office in the region and is undertaking projects in conjunction with area jurisdictions. Also, the Corps of Engineers, the National Park Service, and the Forest Service are involved in major new programs associated with Chicago and the Chicago River. These all have potential greenway benefits and can serve as models for additional work.



Credit: Forest Preserve District of DuPage County



*Greenways offer recreational opportunities close to home: (top) fishing in Silver Lake; (below, left) strolling in the park. Commuters can use greenways to bike or walk to their destinations. New federal legislation that supports such modes of transport have inspired local initiatives, including the "Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program," (inset) from the Illinois Department of Transportation.*



# CHAPTER 2. THE FUNCTION AND VALUE OF GREENWAYS

## WHAT IS A GREENWAY?

A greenway is a corridor of open land that provides one or more of the following benefits:

- Protection and management of natural and cultural resources;
- Provision of recreational opportunities;
- Enhancement of the quality of life and the aesthetic appeal of neighborhoods and communities.

Vegetation is a critical element in a greenway. Greenway functions cannot be achieved without a highly vegetated landscape.

Greenways differ greatly depending on their location and intended function. Greenways may be land based or water based or a combination of the two. It is appropriate for greenways to be created and preserved along stream corridors and shorelines. Some greenways may serve almost exclusively as recreational corridors while others function primarily for environmental protection. In practice, most greenways provide multiple benefits. Greenways vary greatly in scale, from narrow ribbons of green through urban and suburban development to complex corridors a mile or more in width, incorporating diverse natural and cultural features.

In highly urbanized areas, greenways may be designed to accommodate high levels of use. They may be very narrow yet provide major benefits to large numbers of people. In already developed communities, enhancement of existing facilities is often



*Nippersink Creek at Barber Fen Nature Preserve in McHenry County. Streams are nature's own form of greenway. They provide habitat, flood control, recreational opportunities and natural beauty.*

Credit: Wayne Schennum

a very high priority. Greenways may represent an important historic landscape tradition, as do Chicago's boulevards. Older communities may also have valued natural areas and opportunities to restore natural landscapes within greenways.

In suburban settings, greenways may have traditional park-like character, including golf courses and other recreational uses or they may preserve corridors of forest, wetland, meadow and prairie. Increasingly, opportunities to preserve and restore natural environments are being identified as a means to improve natural resource management.

In rural areas, a greenway may simply provide habitat for wildlife, help protect water quality or incorporate historic sites, structures and landscapes. Trails in selected rural greenways allow enjoyment of the rural landscape and may provide important connections to state and national trail networks.

Greenways may consist of both public and private property and are often mixtures of the two. It is not uncommon to establish greenways within a right-of-way in order to provide a trail or bikeway or to provide habitat. Transportation, railroad and utility rights-of-way may be used for this purpose.

This Greenway Plan recognizes that it is not necessary or appropriate for all greenways or areas of greenways to be served by trails. The protection of sensitive environmental and landscape features and the creation of appropriate relationships to adjacent land uses may require exclusion of trails or development of highly controlled or low-use trail and access facilities.



Credit: Suzan Pinsof



Credit: Chicago Park District



Credit: Canal Corridor Association

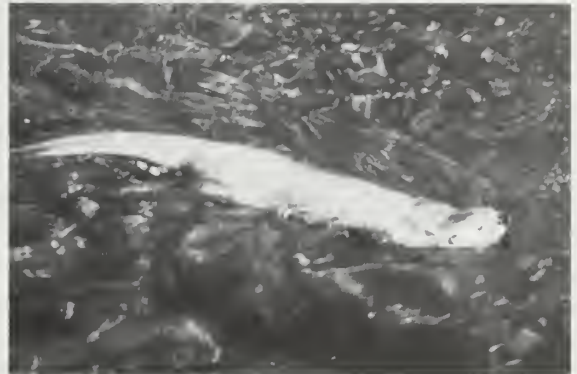
*The Chicago lakefront (above) is the region's most famous greenway. Its linear parkways enhance city life for all urban dwellers. Rural settings also provide greenway opportunities. The Virgil Gilman Trail (above left) is a 14-mile scenic trail in south Kane County that was transformed from an old commuter rail line into a bike path. The historic Illinois & Michigan Canal (lower left) is a greenway that preserves many landmarks that are part of northeastern Illinois' cultural heritage.*



## THE BENEFITS AND FUNCTIONS OF GREENWAYS

The concept of continuity is fundamental to the greenway concept. Greenway preservation assures that natural systems remain connected so that they can function properly. Similarly the linkage of recreational opportunities through greenways maximizes recreational benefit. The continuity of greenways and their linking of open space sites makes them more effective open space than an array of separate, dissimilar, and non-mutually supportive open space sites.

The fact that greenways are often capable of simultaneously providing multiple benefits means that greenways can be a very cost-effective strategy for the use of public and private resources. Greenways can also be cost-effective through their ability to avoid future public and private costs, such as the costs of flood damage.



Credit: The Nature Conservancy

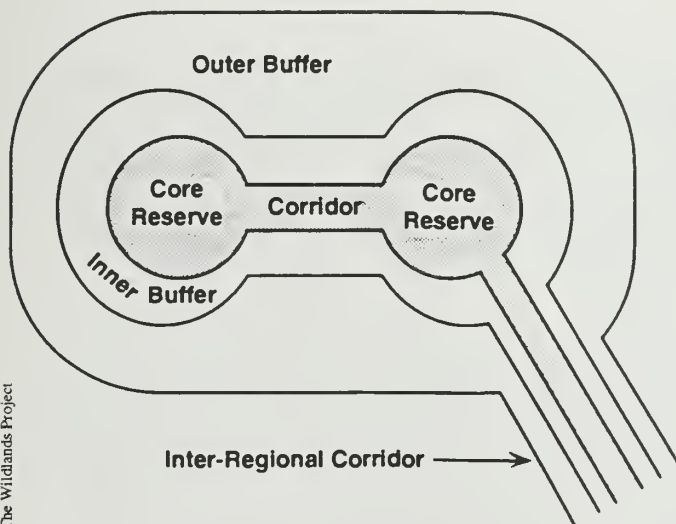
*The river otter is now a rare species in the region. Greenways help preserve the habitat that native plants and animals need.*

## GREENWAYS PROTECT NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

### Habitat Protection and Preservation of the Region's Biodiversity

Greenways provide habitat required by birds, mammals, fish, and the whole interdependent network of life. The linear character of greenways provides plants and animals the space needed for migration and propagation. The loss and fragmentation of habitat, such as through the common practice of stream channelization, have caused a reduction in the diversity of plant and animal species in the region. Proper greenway management preserves and enhances habitat, reduces the effects of fragmentation, and maintains the region's diversity of species. Volunteer habitat restoration projects are helping to address this issue in northeastern Illinois.

The Greenway Plan provides for connections involving a number of large areas—"macro-sites"—that have been identified as important for preserving the region's biodiversity.



Source: The Wildlands Project

*The diagram shows the relationship between core reserves and the corridors that connect them. This matrix illustrates a regional wilderness recovery network, consisting of core reserves, connecting corridors or linkages, and buffer zones. Only two core reserves are shown but a real system may link several reserves.*

## Water Quality and Air Quality Improvement

Greenways along waterways have proved effective as filter strips that trap sediment and pollutants that damage water quality. Pollutants carried by surface and groundwater are intercepted by vegetation and root systems in greenways before they can reach streams, lakes and wetlands.

The vegetation in greenways also helps remove pollutants from the air and moderates summer heat and winds. As a result, the daily living environment can be made more healthful and pleasant.

## Flood and Stormwater Management

Greenways can provide space for streams and wetlands to function naturally to accommodate both normal and flood flows. By protecting floodplains from development, greenways protect people and property from flood damage. The preservation of greenways can therefore be an important aspect of flood and stormwater management programs for watersheds.

## Cultural and Historic Resources

Important archaeological and historic sites and structures lie within the proposed greenway system. Many of the greenways are along historic routes, following trails used by Native Americans and early pioneers, streams that were used for commerce, and roads and rail lines rich in history.

All parts of the region, including rural areas, have historical landscapes that should be

Pollutants Removed			
Percent of subsurface nutrient (nitrate-nitrogen) removed by filter strips			
Forest filter strip		Grass filter strip	
32' width.	52' width.	45' width.	128' width.
94%	97%	50%	97%

Source: University of Illinois: Kovacs, Osborne, Dickson

*Greenways can act as buffer zones that naturally filter pollutants out of the ground water. Above are research results from a study that measured the percentage of subsurface nutrient removed by natural filter strips between row crops and streams.*

considered for incorporation within greenways, wherever possible. Some portions of greenways in the region have been designed by world famous planners, landscape architects, and architects such as Daniel Burnham, Jens Jensen, and Frederick Law Olmsted. This legacy should be protected.



*The Cortland Avenue Bridge spans the North Branch of the Chicago River. The bridge is one of many historically significant sites that fall within proposed greenways.*

Credit: Richard Martner



## Greenways Promote Environmental Awareness

Greenways provide places to teach children and adults the natural sciences and the principles of environmental management. They can learn about the environmental impacts that result from their own decisions and the actions of government and property owners. They can learn how to participate directly in improving their immediate environment. This educational process is easier to undertake because greenways are accessible to people and close to home, work and school.



Credit: Brook McDonald

## Greenways Provide Recreation Opportunities

Greenways provide a mechanism for satisfying the region's trail and water-related recreation needs. The Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, adopted by the Illinois Department of Conservation, places a high priority on linear and water-related recreation in the northeastern Illinois region because of high demands and limited availability of recreational facilities. The active and passive recreational activities accommodated by greenways are a significant benefit to the physical and mental health of the people of the region.

Greenways in northeastern Illinois can provide connections to existing and proposed greenways and trails in other counties and states and contribute to the development of state and national trail systems.



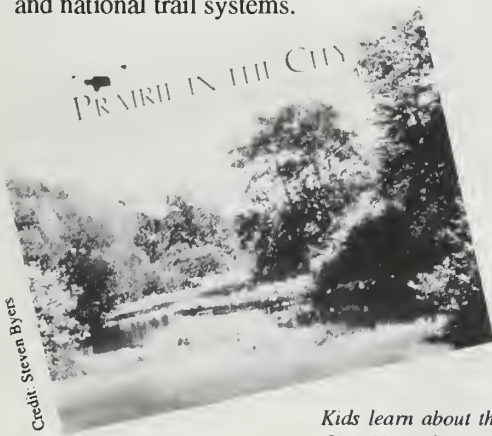
Credit: Beisy Otto



Credit: Beisy Otto



Credit: Forest Preserve District of DuPage County



Credit: Steven Byers

*Kids learn about the environment best from first-hand experience (top). The book "Prairie in the City: Naturalism in Chicago's Parks, 1870-1940," (left) suggests that open spaces have historically helped heighten environmental awareness in the city. Greenways provide outdoor recreation close to home for hikers in Moraine Hills State Park, (above right), bikers and horseback riders along the North Branch Trail (above left) and boaters in McKee Marsh.*

Greenways can provide:

- Opportunities for walking, running, cross-country skiing, bicycling, fishing, canoeing, horseback riding and other activities popular with a wide range of people.
- Recreation conveniently and inexpensively close to home. A regional network can expand opportunities by increasing access to other locations within the system.
- Recreation for special populations such as the elderly and the differently-abled. Special facilities and design features can enhance this aspect and increase access.
- Recreation and open space for areas inadequately served with greenway-related recreation facilities, especially in lower income areas.
- Facilities for non-motorized recreation separate from motorized recreational vehicles.



Credit: Whole Access, Redwood City, CA

*Greenways offer an opportunity for everyone to enjoy the outdoors. They can provide convenient outdoor access to the disabled.*

### Greenways Improve Aesthetics

Greenways provide green space in the environment and visual relief from intensive urban development. Greenways help preserve existing community aesthetics and can separate and reduce conflicts between land uses. The northeastern Illinois region lacks dramatic topography but greenways can provide a visual quality and diversity within the relatively flat landscape.



Credit: Hedrick Blessing

*Greenways promote economic development and improve the aesthetic value of bordering real estate. The historic Gaylord Building in Lockport, Illinois overlooks the serene, natural vista provided by the I&M Canal.*



## Greenways Provide Transportation Opportunities

Greenways can accommodate pedestrian and bicycle travel within and between communities. Walking paths and bikeways in greenways can provide access between homes, shopping, schools, parks and other community facilities. They can serve as connections to regional transportation facilities such as commuter rail and transit stations. Greenways can provide safe travel away from traffic for children and seniors.

Where walking and bicycling in greenway corridors takes the place of motorized vehicle travel, there can be a positive benefit of reducing traffic and improving air quality and public health. Given new federal clean air requirements and priorities for reducing traffic congestion, greenways, along with other bicycle and pedestrian facilities, need to be viewed as part of the solution to traffic mitigation and improved air quality.

## Greenways Promote Regional Identity and Awareness

By diminishing the importance of human-made boundaries, greenways help people understand the inter-relatedness of parts of the region. Such awareness builds a sense of place, identity and responsibility. For example, if a person starts to use a greenway close to home, he or she may begin to learn about and be interested in the segments connected to it, and through that, become interested and involved in the whole system and the locations connected by it.

## Greenways Assist and Promote Economic Development

Greenways provide positive economic benefits to neighborhoods and communities and can function positively to help achieve community development and economic development objectives:

### Transportation Issues

“Transportation sources account for almost seventy percent of lead and carbon monoxide emissions, forty-five percent of nitrous oxides and thirty-five percent of hydrocarbons released into the air.”

*The Surface Transportation  
Policy Project Bulletin  
December 1992*

“A household travel survey conducted by the Chicago Area Transportation Study in 1989 proves that at least fifty percent of all trips taken in DuPage, Lake and McHenry Counties are of three miles or less. Any trip under three miles in length is a good candidate for using a bicycle.”

*Chicagoland Bicycle Federation  
March 1992 newsletter*

“We like the notion of coordinating commuter rail stations with nearby or adjacent greenways. While commuters are increasingly using park-n-ride access to our stations, a significant number of commuters continue to walk or bike. Strengthening the pedestrian linkages between the commuter rail system and greenways should be encouraged.

*Philip A. Pagano  
Executive Director—Metra  
Public Hearing Testimony*

## RESIDENTS CALL TRAILS AN ECONOMIC ASSET

In 1987, residents who owned single family homes within one block of the Burke-Gilman Trail in Seattle gave the following responses to these survey questions:

1. If you were to sell your home today, do you think being near the Burke-Gilman Trail would
  - a. make the home easier to sell .....52.2 %
  - b. make the home more difficult to sell .....8.8
  - c. have no effect on selling the home .....23.9
  - d. do not know .....15.1
  
2. If you were to sell your home today, do you think being near the Burke-Gilman Trail would
  - a. make the home sell for more .....29.6 %
  - b. make the home sell for less .....6.9
  - c. have no effect on the selling price .....47.8
  - d. do not know .....15.7

Source: Seattle Engineering Department

- Greenways can enhance property values and are often used in the marketing of properties.

- Greenways increase spending by local residents on local recreation activities.

- Greenways support commercial uses such as bicycle rental, concessions, and special events.

- Greenways attract visitors and support tourism.

- Agencies that are responsible for managing greenways are spending dollars locally on salaries, supplies, and equipment.

- Greenways can influence corporate location decisions where quality of life is a factor in the site selection process.

- Greenways reduce costs of storm and floodwater management and pollution abatement because they require much less construction and maintenance activity than other approaches.

- Use of native plant materials in greenways significantly reduces landscape maintenance costs as compared to turf maintenance.

- By trapping sediments before reaching waterways, greenways can reduce the expense of dredging.



# CHAPTER 3: GREENWAY OBJECTIVES

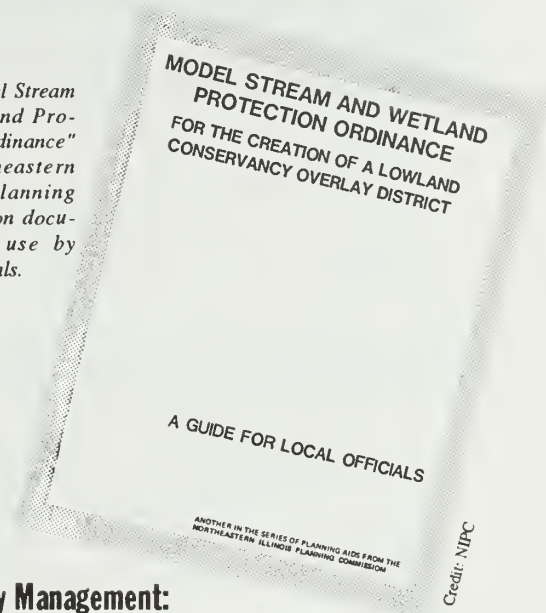
The following are plan objectives that have been identified as a means of focusing greenway efforts, evaluating greenway projects and proposals, and measuring achievement.

## RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

### What to Save and Manage:

1. Encourage the creation and preservation of greenways that contain multiple environmental resources, especially where water-related resources occur in riparian and shoreline corridors.
2. Complete the regional greenway network along the region's major rivers and preserve greenways along their tributaries.
3. Include floodplains in greenways in order to protect flood retention capacity.
4. Develop and manage greenways in order to preserve and restore historical and cultural resources.
5. Develop greenway networks and linkages that preserve and enhance the contiguity of natural systems, preserve biodiversity and macro-sites, and maintain the integrity of the habitat needed by terrestrial, avian and aquatic species.
6. Include nature preserves and identified public and private natural areas in greenways wherever possible.

*The "Model Stream and Wetland Protection Ordinance" is a Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission document for use by local officials.*



### Greenway Management:

1. Properly maintain, restore, and improve existing greenway and trail facilities in the region.
2. Prevent stream channelization within greenways and where possible restore channelized streams to a more natural state to help manage storm and flood waters and to improve habitat.
3. Within greenways provide buffer areas adequate to protect habitat and sensitive environmental resources, such as endangered and threatened species. Buffer areas should provide adequate separation from human activity, protection from pollution, and continuity of the greenway.
4. Provide vegetative filter strips along stream-banks, shorelines, and around wetlands to protect and improve water quality.

Credit: North Branch Prairie Project



*An example of restoration work at Miami Prairie along the North Branch of the Chicago River.*

5. Wherever possible use native plant materials and natural materials for streambank stabilization purposes.
6. Preserve and restore native vegetation and natural landscapes within greenways; discourage and remove exotic and invasive species.
7. Encourage use of best management practices (BMP's) on lands adjacent to greenways to prevent sediment, nutrients, and toxic and hazardous chemicals from affecting greenway resources.

Credit: Chicago Park District



## ACCESSIBILITY AND RECREATION

### Creating and Managing Access:

1. Encourage continuous public access along all regional-scale greenways. Use design standards for access facilities which recognize different greenway types in order to avoid adverse impacts on natural and cultural resources and on adjacent properties. Coordinate access facility design standards, signage, etc. among greenway managers.
2. Encourage the planning and development of multi-use trails in greenways, or multiple trail systems where incompatible uses should be separated, in order to provide opportunities for trail activities in all parts of the region.
3. Design greenway recreation facilities to minimize conflict among uses such as hiking, bicycling, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, boating and fishing.
4. Give high priority to recreational facility development in greenways that provide direct access to the region's water resources.



*Open space is where you make it: a before and after look at a vacant lot developed as a neighborhood park in the City of Chicago.*

5. Encourage the preservation and development of greenways in areas that are inadequately served with greenway-related recreation facilities, especially in lower income areas. Resources available for greenway preservation, development, and enhancement should be allocated in a manner that will help eliminate disparities in the accessibility to high quality greenways and greenway-related recreational facilities, especially for mature and disadvantaged communities.

6. Locate and design trail facilities to avoid adverse impacts on natural and cultural resources, including sensitive habitat areas.



*Managing public access is important to protect fragile natural areas.*

Credit: Illinois Nature Preserves Commission

7. Manage public access where sensitive resources need to be protected and to prevent unauthorized access to private property.

8. Encourage the design of greenway access facilities in order to increase enjoyment by the disabled, handicapped, senior citizens and children. Design access facilities in accordance with the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

9. Connect local greenways to the regional greenway network wherever possible.

10. Provide appropriate maps and signs to indicate greenway access points and connections.

11. Ensure that facilities for motorized recreational vehicles are separated from the regional greenway network.

12. Design recreation facilities to be consistent with natural and historic resource management needs.

13. Use greenways to link existing open space and recreation facilities.

14. Link northeastern Illinois greenway facilities with facilities in adjacent counties and states outside the region, with special attention to creating links in the national trail system.

### **Coordination with Transportation Planning:**

1. Encourage access to regional greenways via public transportation systems (station and bus stop locations, information and signage, provision for bikes on public transportation, bus route planning and scheduling).

2. Consider greenway opportunities early in the planning phase of highway and bridge projects.

3. Design roadways to provide appropriate greenway access points.

4. Design transit and commuter rail station areas to provide convenient connections between the station and nearby or adjacent greenways.

5. Develop infrastructure, such as highways, bridges, and utility systems in a manner that preserves and even enhances greenway continuity and access, using underpasses and bridges as appropriate.

6. Use roadway, rail and utility right-of-way to provide greenway segments and linkages.

7. Coordinate the potential greenway and transportation uses of abandoned railroad right-of-way and of future transportation right-of-way.



## A SAMPLE SETBACK GUIDELINE

### A. SIGNIFICANT NATURAL RESOURCE AREA

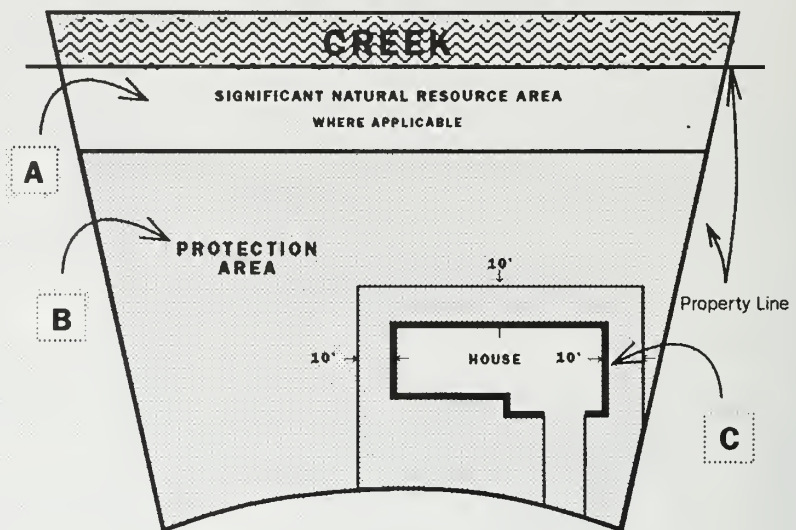
This area shall have no tree or vegetation removal, no grading, fences or foot traffic including dogs.

### B. PROTECTION AREA/OTHER SIGNIFICANT NATURAL RESOURCE AREA (TYPICAL)

Any grading, tree or vegetation removal by contractor during construction will require review of the Architectural Review Committee. Preservation or replanting of native vegetation is encouraged.

### C. CONSTRUCTION AREA (TYPICAL)

Setback variances, special preservation techniques and shifting of placement of the house are encouraged for preservation of significant trees within construction area. Contractor to locate all trees within this area and show on plans submitted for architectural review.



Source: Murrayhill Development, Beaverton, OR

## REGIONAL AND COMMUNITY DESIGN

1. Assure that all interested parties have opportunity for early input into the process for the preserving and developing of individual greenways.
2. Encourage the enhancement and planting of appropriate vegetation in greenways.

3. Improve the quality of landscape design as a part of greenway preservation, incorporating professional landscape design expertise into site planning, infrastructure design, and resource management programs and projects.

4. Utilize design guidelines and standards which encourage preservation and restoration of landscapes and use of native plant materials where appropriate on greenway lands and adjacent properties.



5. Delineate greenways and greenway design standards in local, county and regional plans; incorporate design standards in local land use management procedures. Adopt land use plans and development regulations that promote supportive land use relationships between greenways and adjacent land uses.

6. Where greenway facility design affects historic resources, follow standards of the Department of the Interior in restoring historic structures and landscapes.

7. Maximize visual access to greenways, especially from public lands, roadways, and bridges.

8. Design greenway improvements according to state-of-the art principles for environmental management and restoration, with special attention to stream restoration and bank stabilization, as well as wetland, prairie, and woodland restoration.

9. Design greenway improvements in a manner that is consistent with an open space setting, using natural materials wherever possible.

## EDUCATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

1. Improve the level of understanding among the general public of the functions and values of greenways.

2. Inform the public of the opportunities for enjoying greenways within the region.

3. Assure that public and private decisions regarding planning, land acquisition, development, and management of greenways are based upon the best available information.

4. In the development of detailed plans for greenways include a private landowner component which identifies voluntary actions that could be undertaken by private landowners in order to protect and enhance greenway resources.

5. Increase participation by adults and children in educational programs through which greenways are used to teach the natural sciences and increase the understanding of the importance of a high quality environment.

6. Increase the number of people involved in creating and managing greenways in order to help maintain a high quality environment and increase the level of personal responsibility for environmental quality.



# CHAPTER 4. GREENWAY OPPORTUNITIES

## THE EXISTING REGIONAL GREENWAY NETWORK

Northeastern Illinois offers tremendous greenway opportunities. Many important greenways already are in place which can be linked together and expanded to form a comprehensive regional network.

Pre-settlement human movement and modern development patterns centered along the region's major waterways, the Lake Michigan shoreline, and man-made transportation corridors. Early efforts by conservationists, planners, and parks professionals, in turn, created some of the nation's earliest linear parks and trails along these and other corridors. Existing publicly-owned greenways and trails are shown on the map at the back of this document and include:

### Chicago Boulevards and Classical Parks

Chicago's beautiful classical parks were developed in the 19th and early 20th centuries by the famous landscape architects Olmsted, Jensen, and Burnham. The parks are linked by 26 miles of landscaped boulevards, creating a greenway "necklace" through the city.

### Chicago River

An important transportation and commercial resource, the Chicago River has enjoyed a recent renaissance as a scenic, natural and historic resource. Sections of the North Branch of the Chicago River

already have been protected as public-access greenways by the Chicago Park District and the Forest Preserve District of Cook County.

### Des Plaines River

Flowing from its headwaters in Wisconsin, the Des Plaines helps to form the Illinois River at its confluence with the DuPage and Kankakee Rivers. The Des Plaines River greenway is a critical "spine" in the regional system connecting the North Shore Bikepath, the Illinois Prairie Path, Salt Creek, and the Centennial Trail within the Illinois & Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor. Most of the Des Plaines River is protected as a greenway in Lake and Cook counties. Acquiring the remaining pieces for a completely continuous greenway is a priority of the Lake and Cook County forest preserve districts.

### DuPage River, West Branch

Significant portions of the West Branch of the DuPage River are owned by municipalities and the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County. Protecting the entire West Branch as a greenway is a priority because it is one of DuPage County's three main drainages.

### Fox River and Prairie Trails

Extending from Aurora in southern Kane County 55 miles north to the Wisconsin

border, Kane County's Fox River Trail and McHenry County's Prairie Trail form another "spine" in the western portion of the region. The Fox River provides connections to northwest Cook, DuPage, Kendall, Lake, McHenry and Will counties. It will become even more central as a key natural resource as development in the region expands farther west.

### **Great Western Trail**

Extending farther west than any other regional greenway, the Great Western Trail runs on an abandoned railroad right-of-way from Sycamore in DeKalb County through the entire width of Kane County. It connects with the Fox River Trail in Kane County and the Illinois Prairie Path in DuPage County.

### **Green Bay Trail and North Shore Bikepath**

Following a historic Indian path, the Green Bay Trail parallels an active Chicago & Northwestern Railroad commuter line through several north shore suburbs. The North Shore Bikepath runs along an abandoned railroad right-of-way from Lake Bluff north to the Wisconsin border and west to the Des Plaines River greenway in Libertyville and connects to Mundelein. With on-street routes and other improvements, the Green Bay Trail and North Shore Bikepath eventually will create a continuous greenway from Wilmette to Wisconsin.

### **Illinois & Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor**

Designated in 1984, the I & M Canal region is the nation's first National Heritage Corridor. The Corridor comprises many important natural areas and historic sites as well as numerous water-

ways, including the Chicago River, the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal, the Des Plaines River, the Cal-Sag Channel and the I & M Canal itself. Several trails enhance the Corridor, including the I & M Canal State Trail, several county and municipal trails, and the planned 23-mile Centennial Trail which eventually will link the State Trail to the Chicago Portage National Historic Site near Chicago. Congress is also studying the possibility of designating the historic water route between Lake Michigan and the Mississippi River as the Illinois National Historic Trail. The proposed Illinois Trail would be part of the national trails system and would follow the waterways included in the I & M Canal National Heritage Corridor and the Illinois River to the Mississippi.

### **Illinois Prairie Path**

One of the nation's oldest "rails-to-trails" conversions, the Illinois Prairie Path is a key east-west regional trail that connects the Fox, DuPage, and Des Plaines rivers and numerous other greenways.

### **Lake Michigan Shoreline**

Since the 1840s, Chicago civic leaders have worked to keep the lakeshore "forever open, free and clear." Virtually the entire length of the Lake Michigan shoreline in the city is now public parkland. Other communities along Lake Michigan, such as Evanston, have also worked to protect and increase public ownership and access to the shoreline.

The Lake County Forest Preserve District plan for the Ft. Sheridan site would create an important additional segment of public open space along the lakefront. Additional open space acquisition along the lakefront should be pursued as parcels become available.



## Palatine Trail

This 15-mile on-and off-street trail corridor runs roughly north-south through Palatine and is heavily used by its residents and others from adjacent towns. The trail connects to Deer Grove Preserve, Harper College, and could be extended to the Paul Douglas Preserve.

## Virgil Gilman Trail

A 14-mile scenic trail built on a former commuter rail line, the Virgil Gilman trail travels west from Aurora in south Kane County. A portion of the trail parallels Blackberry Creek, one of Kane County's priority greenway corridors. The trail could be extended northwest into Kane County as additional areas along the creek are protected, as well as southeast into Kendall and Will counties along an abandoned EJ&E railroad right-of-way.

## REGIONAL PRIORITIES

This Plan identifies a number of greenways and linkages to existing greenways which should be regarded as top priorities. Greenway opportunities in each of the six counties were evaluated to determine which were of importance to the entire region. Regional priorities were then selected based on the following criteria:

1. Directly benefits multiple communities and substantial populations;
2. Bridges gaps to help complete existing greenways;
3. Creates new connections between existing greenways;

4. Provides wildlife (animal and plant) migration paths between isolated natural areas;
5. Protects tributary streams and helps to preserve water quality and ecological value in main regional waterways;
6. Protects residential and commercial areas threatened by flood damage;
7. Improves access to recreational trails where currently lacking;
8. Protects high quality natural areas threatened by development;
9. Protects important scenic vistas and historic areas from development.
10. Serves mature and distressed communities with open space deficiencies and disadvantaged populations;
11. Offers a variety of recreational uses;
12. Provides alternative transportation routes (i.e., walking, bicycling) and creates access to public and mass transit systems.

# PRIORITY REGIONAL GREENWAYS

The following priority regional greenways are listed alphabetically, and represent critical greenway connections. Each is important to the development of a strong regional greenway system and meets at least four or more of the key function criteria listed above. These greenways were also identified repeatedly as most important by participants in sub-regional planning sessions. Full descriptions of each are given in the relevant county or Chicago section which follows. The number(s) for each greenway corresponds to the number(s) on the map for identification purposes.

**Benefits**

Benefits Multiple Communities  
Completes Existing Greenways  
Creates New Connections  
Assists Wildlife Migration  
Preserves Water Quality  
Prevents Flood Damage  
Improves Trail Access  
Buffers Existing Preserves  
Scenic & Historic Areas  
Open Space for Disadvantaged  
Variety of Recreational Uses  
Alternative Transport Route

Greenway Name	Map #	County	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Blackberry Creek	59	Kane			•	•	•			•	•			
Centennial Trail	29,41,107	Cook, DuPage, Will	•		•	•			•		•	•	•	•
Chicago Boulevard System	1	Chicago			•				•		•	•	•	•
Chicago River	2-4,10-13, 72-74	Chicago, Cook, Lake	•	•	•			•		•	•	•	•	
Chicago, St. Paul & Milwaukee Rail Line <i>Joliet to Manhattan sect.</i>	108	Will County			•	•			•	•		•	•	
Des Plaines River	14,76	Cook, Lake	•	•	•	•		•	•		•	•	•	•
DuPage River W.& E. Br. (and Will Cnty. sect.)	42,57,110	DuPage, Will	•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•		•	•
Fox River	42,79,96	Kane, Lake, McHenry	•			•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Green Bay Trail	15,80	Cook, Lake	•	•					•			•	•	•
Illinois & Michigan Canal (Natl. Heritage Corr.)	31,174	Cook, DuPage, Will	•		•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	
Illinois Prairie Path	32,52,64	Cook, DuPage, Kane	•	•	•				•			•	•	•
Kankakee River	116	Will	•		•	•		•		•	•		•	
Kishwaukee River	99	McHenry				•	•			•	•			
Lake Michigan Shoreline	6,82	Chicago, Cook, Lake	•	•		•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Mill Creek	67	Kane			•	•	•			•	•		•	
Nippersink Creek - North Branch	101	McHenry				•	•			•	•			
North Shore Bikepath	86	Lake	•	•	•				•			•	•	•
NW Cook County Connections	17-24	Cook			•	•	•		•	•			•	•
Old Plank Road Trail	33,119	Cook, Will	•		•				•	•		•	•	•
Prairie Trail	103	McHenry		•	•	•			•				•	•
Salt Creek	25,55	Cook, DuPage	•	•		•		•			•		•	•
SW Cook County Forest Preserve	35-37	Cook			•	•			•	•		•	•	•
Thorn Creek	40,124	Cook, Will		•	•	•	•		•	•		•	•	
Virgil Gilman Trail	70	Kane	•	•	•	•			•				•	•
West Lake County Loop Trail	89	Lake	•		•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•

## COOK COUNTY - CITY OF CHICAGO

The City of Chicago and Chicago Park District have several plans to restore and create a greenway system that is unique within the region. As the greenway pioneer in the region, Chicago already has in place a greenway system along its classical parks, boulevards, lakefront parks, and along portions of the Chicago River. Special attention is being given to access and fair distribution of transportation and recreational resources across all neighborhoods of the city.

### Key Greenway Needs: Highlights

1. Fill key gaps along lakefront to create a continuous greenway.
2. Treat the entire Chicago River as a greenway and expand public access to and awareness of the River.
3. Restore and expand the boulevard system to a high-quality greenway and trail system.
4. Identify abandoned or lightly-used rail corridors for trail systems throughout the city.

## PRIORITY GREENWAYS

*(Numbers listed after each greenway refer to the map key.)*

### Boulevard System [ 1 ]

The boulevard greenway system is crucial for the region since it allows for connections between the lakefront and other city parks. The City of Chicago has placed signs along its boulevards designating them as a bike trail system. However, this plan should be integrated with efforts to refurbish and re-landscape the boulevard parkways themselves. The City of Chicago has also identified a number of other streets that it wants to develop as landscaped boulevards. In addition, other key connecting streets should be striped and signed as bike routes and their parkways improved (e.g., tree plantings).

## Chicago River (North Branch, North Shore Channel, and South Branch)

### North Branch [ 2 ]

Chicago River urban design guidelines for new development along the downtown riverfront area as well as a Riverwalk and park improvement plan for areas along the North Branch have been established by the City of Chicago and the Friends of the Chicago River. As plans for a Chicago River greenway progress, special care should be taken to protect planned manufacturing districts in keeping with the guidelines' recognition of the need to accommodate multiple uses along the river. Additions to public parks and existing trail segments in Chicago along the North Branch recently have been made by the Chicago Park District and Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (MWRD) in an effort to create a continuous greenway along the River and connect with the Cook County Forest Preserve District's North Branch Trail which begins at Devon Ave. Plans for a canoe trail along a section of the North Branch in Cook County are also being discussed and can proceed before a land-based trail is in place.

### North Shore Channel [ 3 ]

This corridor is owned by the MWRD which requires all lessees to develop a trail on leased land along the waterway. Some sections of trail already are in place, but need to be connected with other segments in the city and suburban Cook County. The Chicago Park District (CPD) recently received a grant to help bridge some of the existing gaps, allowing it to create a trail connection between Gateway, Ronan, and Legion Parks.



### **South Branch (and the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal) [ 4 ]**

Most of this corridor is characterized by heavy commercial and industrial uses. However, this MWRD-owned waterway could be the basis for a connection between the Lakefront Path, boulevard system and the Centennial Trail where it begins at Harlem Ave. The CPD has developed aggressive plans for new park spaces and historical interpretive centers along a South Branch tributary, Bubbly Creek, connecting with the origins of the I&M Canal. The CPD also is developing a design for its new Chinatown Park, which will provide a significant addition to public open space south of 18th Street.

### **Illinois & Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor [ 5 ]**

The I & M Canal begins in Chicago, and national funding for major capital improvements to the Heritage Corridor is being sought by the various public and private agencies to enhance the open space conservation and historic preservation aspects of the Corridor.

### **Lake Michigan Shoreline [ 6 ]**

Despite recent improvements to the Lakefront Path and plans for other improvements (e.g., path and headland park additions as part of Navy Pier redevelopment), the Chicago Park District's (CPD) lakefront greenway is missing several pieces needed to provide continuous public access along Lake Michigan. At the south end of the lakefront, a better connection south of the South Shore Cultural Center is needed, as well as one between Rainbow Park and Calumet Park through the former South Works steel factory area. At the north end, a greenway connection is desirable,

although perhaps not feasible, through Rogers Park to link the CPD's lakefront parks between Hollywood Avenue and Evanston. A recently signed street bike route does provide an on-street trail connection from the north end of Lincoln Park to the Evanston Lakefront Path. Along the northern lakeshore, the Lake County Forest Preserve District plan for the Ft. Sheridan site would create an important additional segment of public open space along the lakefront. Additional open space acquisitions along the lakefront should be pursued as parcels become available.

A Shoreline Protection Plan is also being developed under the guidance of the Army Corps of Engineers. It should ensure the structural integrity of Chicago's Lake Michigan shoreline through the use of step-stone revetments, improve the aesthetics of the existing revetments and other protection systems, and provide better access to the lake for multiple recreational uses.

## **OTHER POTENTIAL GREENWAYS**

*(Numbers listed after each greenway refer to the map key.)*

### **Railroad Corridors [ 7 ]**

Significant opportunities also exist to utilize abandoned or lightly-used rail corridors throughout the city. One corridor has been identified along abandoned rail line which would connect with FPDCC's Dan Ryan Woods on the city's south side. Other potential corridors, such as portions of the Southwest Rapid Transit Line to Midway Airport, are currently being reviewed by the city's Department of Transportation.



## Ravenswood Greenway [ 8 ]

Ravenswood Avenue has already been landscaped and treated as a greenway by adjacent residents in many areas along the Ravenswood embankment that parallels the Chicago & Northwestern Railroad's North Line. This area runs from Wellington Ave. north to Rogers Park.

## COOK COUNTY - NORTH HALF

The north half of Cook County (defined as all portions of Cook County north of Madison Street in Chicago) is notable for the number of its large forest preserves that are in close proximity to one another, and its significant greenways along the Des Plaines River and North Branch of the Chicago River.

The area is also distinguished by the many communities which have developed extensive municipal bike/pedestrian path systems, and coordinated them with neighboring towns and the Forest Preserve District of Cook County (FPDCC).

### Greenway Needs: Highlights

1. Develop municipal trail systems as spokes around Cook County Forest Preserve hubs.
2. Design trail alignments and otherwise coordinate inter-municipal trail systems to create in effect a new regional trail network.
3. Incorporate bike/pedestrian connections into road projects, especially given the large number of Strategic Regional Arterials in northwest Cook County.
4. Restore and manage native plant communities and animal habitat in area preserves.

## PRIORITY GREENWAYS

*(Numbers listed after each greenway refer to the map key.)*

### Chicago River (North Branch, North Shore Channel, Skokie River, West Fork)

#### North Branch [ 10 ]

Most of the main section of the North Branch is protected as a greenway in north Cook County, and includes a planned canoe trail and popular bike/pedestrian path.

#### North Shore Channel [ 11 ]

A greenway and trail already exist along portions of this Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (MWRD)-owned waterway. Landscaping and improving the entire North Shore Channel as a greenway and linking its existing trail sections eventually could create a trail linking Wilmette lakefront parks, the Evanston Lakefront Path, the southern terminus of the Green Bay Trail, and FPDCC's North Branch Trail system between Foster and Bryn Mawr avenues in Chicago.

#### Skokie River [ 12 ]

The southern section along the Skokie River, including the Skokie Lagoons, is owned by the FPDCC and includes the northern end of the North Branch Trail.

#### West Fork [ 13 ]

The towns adjoining the West Fork would like to see it treated as a greenway for flood protection, animal habitat, and recreational trail purposes, where appropriate and feasible. However, much of the river is lined by private development, and FPDCC owns only a relatively small

connection between the West Fork and its North Branch system around Dundee Rd. A proposed trail, paralleling a section of the West Fork, the Techny Trail, would link the Glenview train station and residential areas and could eventually extend south to Morton Grove and north to Northbrook.

### Des Plaines River [ 14 ]

Virtually all of the Des Plaines River in Cook County is protected as a greenway. However, certain key parcels (e.g., parcels where the Illinois Prairie Path and Des Plaines River would meet near Maywood) are not in public ownership and are necessary to form a continuous greenway. FPDCC also plans to develop a bike trail along the Des Plaines River to connect with the Lake County system.

### Green Bay Trail [ 15 ]

Anchored at the southern end in Wilmette, the Green Bay Trail runs alongside an active Chicago & Northwestern Railroad line, and connects numerous north shore communities as it extends into Lake County. The trail also forms a connection with signed street routes to the Evanston Lakefront Path to the east.

### North/Northwest Cook County Forest Preserve Connections

The FPDCC has identified a number of potential trail and ecological greenway connections between its preserves. These connections often incorporate other municipal parks or public facilities and include:

- Baker's Lake to Deer Grove Preserve [ 17 ]-potential bike trail connecting Baker's Lake site (including Barrington's adjoining Ron Beese Park and FPDCC's newly acquired extension to Baker's Lake) to Deer Grove, which has several miles of internal trails.

- Crabtree Preserve to Paul Douglas Woods [ 18 ]- potential bike/pedestrian connection along Highway 62 as part of Illinois Department of Transportation's (IDOT) plans to widen road. Extensive trail system planned within Paul Douglas Preserve, and Crabtree houses popular nature center. Villages and park districts of South Barrington and Hoffman Estates also consider this connection a priority.

- Ned Brown (Busse Woods) Preserve to Poplar Creek Preserve [ 19 ]- possible trail connection through village of Hoffman Estates and Schaumburg, or along south side of I-90 corridor. Other possible connections south to the Illinois Prairie Path along the I-355 corridor or along Salt Creek are also desirable.

- Paul Douglas Preserve to Poplar Creek Preserve [ 20 ]- several trail connection routes are possible using Barrington Road as the main leg.

- Poplar Creek Preserve to Elgin [ 21 ]- numerous greenway and trail connections possible west along Poplar Creek, Shoe Factory Rd. and other routes to connect with Elgin's proposed municipal greenway/trail system, the Fox River, as well as other neighboring municipal trail systems (e.g., Hoffman Estates, Streamwood).

- Poplar Creek Preserve to Spring Lake Preserve [ 22 ]- a greenway and trail connection are planned through the Sears-owned property which lies between these two preserves. Access under I-90 and other issues must be addressed to ensure that the greenway/trail actually can be linked.

- Poplar Creek Preserve to Tri-County Park area [ 23 ]- a number of greenway/trail linkages are possible

between the preserve and the region's new Tri-County state park, including several undeveloped pieces of land and a possible connection along the EJ&E rail corridor.

■ Spring Lake to Helms Woods (FPD of Kane County) [ 24 ]- a short connection could be made west of Spring Lake Preserve to Kane County's Helms Woods Preserve.

### Salt Creek [ 25 ]

Completing the greenway connection from Ned Brown Preserve (Busse Woods) south along Salt Creek to the Cook-DuPage county line is crucial if the DuPage sections are to create a continuous system all the way to the Des Plaines River.

## OTHER POTENTIAL GREENWAYS

*(Numbers listed after each greenway refer to the map key.)*

### Buffalo Creek [ 9 ]

This creek drains to the Des Plaines River and sections of it already have been protected as a greenway in southern Lake County.

### McDonald Creek [ 16 ]

Arlington Heights has developed a three mile trail along McDonald Creek which connects to an on-street route leading to Ned Brown Preserve, and would like to see more bike trails developed along the publicly-owned sections of the Creek.

### Community Trail Systems

Some communities have developed as many as 30 miles of internal Class I (off-street paths), and Class

II and III (on-street) bike routes. Towns like Schaumburg and Buffalo Grove have made bicycle paths a cornerstone of their community planning activities.

Virtually all communities reported difficulty keeping pace with the tremendous demand for bike paths, and many noted that bike paths are the first or second most requested recreational facility in park district surveys.

Communities with trail systems ranging from modest to complex include (in alphabetical order):

- ☐ Arlington Heights
- ☐ Barrington area communities
- ☐ Bartlett
- ☐ Buffalo Grove
- ☐ Des Plaines
- ☐ Elk Grove Village
- ☐ Evanston
- ☐ Glenview
- ☐ Hanover Park
- ☐ Hoffman Estates
- ☐ Mount Prospect
- ☐ Northbrook
- ☐ Palatine
- ☐ Prospect Heights
- ☐ Rolling Meadows
- ☐ Roselle
- ☐ Schaumburg
- ☐ Skokie
- ☐ Streamwood

## COOK COUNTY - SOUTH HALF

The Forest Preserve District of Cook County (FPDCC) manages a tremendous open space resource in the south half of Cook County (defined as all of Cook County south of Madison St. in Chicago), anchored by its 14,000-acre Palos Woods preserves. Other holdings, such as the Thorn Creek preserves, essentially are greenway systems and some have trails.



Completing and enhancing these greenway systems and connecting other large holdings with greenways is a priority as growth accelerates in the south half of the county.

#### Greenway Needs: Highlights

1. Aggressively acquire inholdings in areas where they will create or complete connections to other preserves.
2. Coordinate with IDOT to incorporate trail connections into road improvements, especially in conjunction with planning for identified Strategic Regional Arterials and other key road corridors.
3. Create connections to DuPage and Will County Forest Preserve District preserves, greenways, and trails.
4. Provide better access to greenways and trails for mature communities with fewer outdoor recreation opportunities.

## PRIORITY GREENWAYS

*(Numbers listed after each greenway refer to the map key.)*

### Centennial Trail [ 29 ]

Following Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (MWRD)-owned land along the Des Plaines River and Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal, the Cook County Centennial Trail portion anchors the Trail's eastern leg and potential connection to the city of Chicago. It connects the Chicago Portage National Historic Site, a rare prairie remnant—the Santa Fe Prairie—the Palos preserves, and the historic canal town of Lemont. MWRD has agreed to long-term leases for the trail; final lease arrangements and actual trail development are the next step.

### Des Plaines River [ 30 ]

Filling the gaps in FPDCC Des Plaines River holdings near the Chicago Portage Site is a top priority to ensure a complete connection between the Des Plaines, Salt Creek, Illinois Prairie Path, and Centennial Trail systems.

### Illinois & Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor [ 31 ]

The I & M Heritage Corridor incorporates many natural areas, historic sites and towns, and recreational trails, such as the FPDCC's I & M Canal trail near the Palos preserves and the proposed Centennial Trail.

### Illinois Prairie Path [ 32 ]

Completing a greenway/trail connection between the Prairie Path's eastern trailhead at 1st Avenue in Maywood and the Des Plaines River should be considered a top priority.

### Old Plank Road Trail [ 33 ]

Extending the Old Plank Road Trail eastward from Will County across southern Cook County would provide important connections with the Tinley Creek and Thorn Creek greenway systems. It may also be possible to extend the trail east to Indiana along the remaining abandoned Penn Central right-of-way.

### South/Southwest Cook County Forest Preserve Connections

A number of important greenway/trail connections should be made between Cook County forest preserves. These connections include:

- McGinnes Slough Connections [ 35 ]-by purchasing inholdings and other connecting parcels, greenway linkages can

be made between McGinnes and Tampier Sloughs, the Tinley Creek preserves, and Orland Park preserves.

- Palos Preserves to Tinley Creek along Cal-Sag [ 36 ] - by securing a greenway connection along a portion of MWRD's Calumet-Sag Channel, an additional connection east of the Palos Woods could be made to the Tinley Creek Preserves.

- Palos Preserves to Waterfall Glen Preserve [ 37 ] (FPD of DuPage County) - creating some kind of trail connection across the I & M Canal/Centennial Trail area to the Waterfall Glen forest preserve surrounding Argonne Labs would create another linkage between the south half of Cook County and DuPage County.

### Thorn Creek [ 40 ]

Completing the Cook County sections of the Thorn Creek greenway would create a continuous greenway connection with the Forest Preserve District of Will County's Thorn Creek holdings. It would also provide a connection to the Old Plank Road Trail, the Plum Creek Preserves, and linkages to Indiana greenways. Other possible connections include Governor's State University, and important natural areas such as Markham Prairie, Sand Ridge Prairie, and Wolf Lake.

## OTHER POTENTIAL GREENWAYS

*(Numbers listed after each greenway refer to the map key.)*

### Butterfield Creek [ 26 ]

The Village of Matteson plans a greenway and trail system along Butterfield Creek and connecting utility right-of-way to protect the flood plain and create

a trail connection between the Old Plank Road Trail and Tinley Creek forest preserves.

### Calumet-Sag Channel [ 27 ]

A greenway and trail connection, especially on the north side, along this MWRD-owned waterway would create an ecological and recreational connection east to the forest preserves and other public open spaces in the Lake Calumet area. Five new water aeration sites have been installed along the Cal-Sag Channel to improve the quality of the channel's water. Each has a different design and includes a small park, which could anchor an interpretive trail system.

### Calumet River and Little Calumet River [ 28 ]

A greenway along these waterways would connect to the Cal-Sag Channel greenway and could incorporate important natural areas in the vicinity. The greenway could form a connection to Indiana with trail linkage north along Wolf Lake to the Lake Michigan shoreline.

### Plum Creek [ 34 ]

FPDCC's holdings along this stream will connect with the Will County's holdings for a continuous protected greenway along Plum Creek and a direct connection with the Indiana border.

### Spring Creek [ 38 ]

A greenway along Spring Creek would form a key connection between FPDCC holdings to the west and several high quality wetland areas in Orland Park. This greenway might also be used for a trail connection between Orland Park's internal trail system and the Palos Preserves further north.

## Stony Creek [ 39 ]

Connecting to the Cal-Sag Channel near the Palos preserves, this creek could be protected as a greenway, especially in the area near the Channel.

## Community Trail Systems

A number of south Cook County suburbs have aggressively developed municipal or park district bike trail systems, and many others have expressed a desire to establish a greenway/trail system. The communities which are already actively involved include:

- ☐ Country Club Hills
- ☐ Homewood-Flossmoor
- ☐ Lemont
- ☐ Matteson
- ☐ Oak Forest
- ☐ Olympia Fields
- ☐ Orland Hills
- ☐ Orland Park
- ☐ Park Forest
- ☐ Richton Park
- ☐ Tinley Park

## DUPAGE COUNTY

The Illinois Prairie Path, most of which is in DuPage County, forms the spine of the west suburban trail system. Including the Prairie Path, DuPage County has 80 miles of existing trails. The Forest Preserve District of DuPage County (FPDDC) and local communities will concentrate on securing greenway and trail connections between forest preserves, local parks, the Prairie Path, the West Branch of the DuPage River, and elsewhere. Protecting the county's three watersheds—Salt Creek, the East and West Branches of the DuPage River—is also a priority.

### Greenway Needs: Highlights

1. Use trails as alternative transportation systems to transit stations, schools, libraries, parks and other public buildings.
2. Protect rivers, streams, floodplains, and adjacent wetlands and uplands for flood storage and to preserve these ecosystems' natural resource value.
3. Clean up and restore riparian greenways to high quality, and use as primary nature/environmental interpretation centers for school children and families.
4. Provide more recreation opportunities given county residents' expressed desire for more trail facilities.

## PRIORITY GREENWAYS

*(Numbers listed after each greenway refer to the map key.)*

## Centennial Trail [ 41 ]

Although DuPage County's section of the Centennial Trail is relatively small, it provides a connection not only to the longer Cook and Will County sections,



but also a potential linkage between FPDDC's Waterfall Glen and Cook County's Palos Preserves.

### **East Branch (DuPage River) [ 42 ]**

The area around the East Branch has been heavily developed, with the exception of county forest preserves, local parks, and the Morton Arboretum. Opportunities to preserve (i.e., through purchase or easement) more greenway property along the East Branch also should be pursued, where feasible. Trails on publicly-owned lands (e.g., between Hidden Lake, the Morton Arboretum, Danada, and Herrick Lake preserves) should also be pursued.

### **Illinois Prairie Path [ 52 ]**

Plans to complete the Path's spur to Geneva are underway by the DuPage County Division of Transportation which owns and operates much of the Path. This will be the fourth separate section of the Path as it heads west into Kane County. Given the importance of the Illinois Prairie Path, new road construction or other interruptions in the trail should be avoided, or other provisions such as underpasses, bridges, etc. made.

### **Salt Creek [ 55 ]**

Salt Creek is eastern DuPage County's only major drainage system, and serious flood problems historically have occurred along the stream. Although a structured flood control project has been undertaken by the County board to control flood damage along Salt Creek, restoring the stream as a natural greenway, where feasible, could still help alleviate flood damage and provide recreational and aesthetic benefits.

### **West Branch (DuPage River) [ 57 ]**

Much of the West Branch has been preserved as a greenway, but additional pieces should be acquired or protected to complete it. Protecting homes and businesses in the West Branch floodplain by preserving the West Branch and adjacent wetlands will become increasingly important as more DuPage County land is paved and unable to absorb stormwater. Trail segments on FPDDC land and the Naperville Riverwalk and other sections may be connected to form an important north-south trail linkage.

## **OTHER POTENTIAL GREENWAYS**

*(Numbers listed after each greenway refer to the map key.)*

### **Forest Preserve District Connections**

The Forest Preserve District of DuPage County and local communities have identified a number of greenway or trail connections between forest preserves and parks, many of which will use area roadways. These include:

- Songbird Slough to Wood Dale Grove [ 43 ] - greenway/trail connection between these two preserves.
- Churchill Woods to Hidden Lake [ 44 ] - possibility to use some portions of highway department gravel service roads (FPDDC has an easement agreement) for trail connection.
- Herrick Lake/Danada to Hidden Lake [ 45 ] - greenway and trail connection along the northern border of the Morton Arboretum.

■ Herrick Lake to Blackwell [ 46 ] - trail connection along Butterfield Road or other routes.

■ McDowell Grove to Blackwell and Illinois Prairie Path [ 47 ] - greenway and trail connection connecting Herrick Lake preserve, the Herrick Rd. bike lane, the Aurora branch of the Prairie Path, the greenway and trail plan that is part of the proposed Cantera development in Warrenville along the West Branch, and McDowell Grove preserve.

■ McDowell Grove to Naperville parks [ 48 ] - connection to complete continuous greenway along southern portion of the West Branch.

■ Tri-County Park/Pratts Wayne Woods to Mallard Lake/West Branch Timber Ridge preserves [ 49 ] - greenway and trail connections can be made between the state's new Tri-County Park and the adjacent Pratts Wayne woods and other FPDDC preserves to the east and south.

■ West DuPage Woods/Winfield Mounds/Timber Ridge to Blackwell and Illinois Prairie Path [ 50 ] - greenway connection north-south along DuPage River, West Branch between two preserves, and a trail connection south to the Aurora branch of the Prairie Path.

## Great Western Trail [ 51 ]

(DuPage County section). An eastern section of the Great Western Trail beginning at the Prairie Path's main stem in Villa Park extends from Villa Avenue to the Prairie Path's Elgin Branch. However, better means of managing several bridge crossings, including a bridge to cross I-355, are needed to make the trail easily usable and continuous.

## Klein Creek [ 53 ]

A potential wetland mitigation project as part of Illinois Department of Transportation's planned Hwy. 64 road improvements could create a greenway connection along Klein Creek which eventually could connect with Winfield Mounds Preserve.

## North-South Tollway (I-355) Corridor [ 54 ]

In conjunction with the proposed connection between Churchill Woods and Hidden Lake forest preserves, a trail could be extended along I-355 in DuPage County and south into Will County if proposed extension of I-355 is made south to I-80.

## Waubansee Creek [ 56 ]

Virgil Gilman Trail could be extended east into DuPage County along Waubansee Creek, creating a connection with the EJ&E Railroad corridor (possible dual recreational trail/commuter rail use), and eventually extending along the Illinois Prairie Path to the West Branch greenway between McDowell Grove and Burlington Park forest preserves in Naperville.

## Winfield Creek [ 58 ]

Anchored by the Wheaton Park District's Lincoln Marsh, Northside Park, Cosley Animal Farm, and Carol Stream's Community Park, significant portions of a greenway ("EcoBelt") already exists along Winfield Creek. This greenway will make another connection among the Cantigny Park and Museum and the Illinois Prairie Path, the West Branch of the DuPage River, and the Great Western Trail.

## Community Trail Systems

Many DuPage County municipalities have developed significant greenway and trail systems along the DuPage River or its tributaries. For example, Wheaton Park District has established a system of wetlands, an “EcoBelt” trail along Winfield Creek, including a proposed wetlands education center at Lincoln Marsh.

Naperville has preserved and developed its section of the West Branch into an exemplary Riverwalk—a combined greenway, downtown pedestrian way and trail system. Other towns along the Salt Creek, East Branch, West Branch and tributaries are planning similar programs.

Communities and park districts involved in greenway and trail planning include:

- |                                        |                                       |
|----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aurora        | <input type="checkbox"/> Lisle        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bartlett      | <input type="checkbox"/> Lombard      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bolingbrook   | <input type="checkbox"/> Naperville   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Burr Ridge    | <input type="checkbox"/> Oak Brook    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Carol Stream  | <input type="checkbox"/> Warrenville  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Downers Grove | <input type="checkbox"/> West Chicago |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Elmhurst      | <input type="checkbox"/> Wheaton      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Glen Ellyn    | <input type="checkbox"/> Willowbrook  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hinsdale      | <input type="checkbox"/> Woodridge    |

## KANE COUNTY

Kane County has some of the region’s best recreational trails and greenways, including the Fox River Trail, the Virgil Gilman Trail, the Great Western Trail, and the western sections of the Illinois Prairie Path.

In the future, both the Kane County Development Department and the Forest Preserve District of Kane County (FPDKC) intend to focus their efforts on protecting several key “water resource management areas”. These areas include some of the county’s most important Fox River tributary streams which have begun to experience significant development pressure.

### Greenway Needs: Highlights

1. Protect key corridors and open space areas to preserve distinctiveness of Kane County’s “rural/urban form” as farmland is developed.
2. Coordinate municipal, park district, county and forest preserve district efforts to maximize linear parks along Fox River and tributaries.
3. Develop municipal and other trail connections branching to and from the Fox River Trail main trunk system.
4. Incorporate greenway trail design into new development through specific design requirements, setbacks, park donation ordinances, etc.

## PRIORITY GREENWAYS

*(Numbers listed after each greenway refer to the map key.)*

### Blackberry Creek [ 59 ]

The Virgil Gilman Trail follows a portion of Blackberry Creek, a high quality,



scenic stream. Pieces of public open space in place along the stream could be connected to form a protected greenway.

### **Fox River [ 62 ]**

Although most of the Fox River has a continuous trail system along or near its banks, additional linear parkland should be acquired by local towns or county as available to complete and enhance the greenway and trail.

### **Great Western Trail [ 63 ]**

The Great Western Trail runs east-west on an abandoned railroad right-of-way from Sycamore in DeKalb County to St. Charles and can be connected via on-street routes to the Fox River Trail and Illinois Prairie Path.

### **Illinois Prairie Path [ 64 ]**

Kane County has three sections of the Prairie Path—the Elgin and Aurora branches and Batavia spur—and other connections are being connected, such as the Geneva spur, and a complete connection at Aurora to the Virgil Gilman Trail.

### **Mill Creek [ 67 ]**

A continuous greenway would connect Campton Forest Preserve near the stream's headwaters to the Fox River. Numerous large residential developments are being designed along Mill Creek. The County intends to protect the creek's banks as a greenway and a possible continuous trail connection to the Fox River Trail.

### **Virgil Gilman Trail [ 70 ]**

This 14-mile trail parallels Blackberry Creek and could be extended northwest as the Creek is protected as a greenway.

## **OTHER POTENTIAL GREENWAYS**

*(Numbers listed after each greenway refer to the map key.)*

### **Chicago & Northwestern Railroad [ 60 ]**

Beginning at Elgin, this rail line would create a trail connection from the Fox River Trail northwest through Gilberts, merging with the proposed Huntley-Union-Marengo Trail in McHenry County.

### **Ferson Creek [ 61 ]**

Located in the middle of the county, Ferson Creek flows near the Great Western Trail—where the trail crosses through Leroy Oakes Forest Preserve—and eventually joins the Fox River.

### **Jelkes Creek [ 65 ]**

This Fox River tributary in northeast Kane County faces significant development pressure. A portion of the creek is now being developed as a greenway trail and FPDKC and the local communities would like to see the entire stream protected.

### **Mid-County Trail [ 66 ]**

Several municipalities regard this potential trail corridor (parallel to but west of the Fox River Trail) as a priority in response to the demand for biking and walking trails. Residents who do not live directly along the Fox River would have better access to recreational trails.

### **Otter Creek [ 68 ]**

This Fox River tributary could create a greenway connection between Elgin on the north, and Ferson Creek on the south.

### **Tyler Creek [ 69 ]**

Tyler Creek is a major drainage in northern Kane County. Kane County and city

of Elgin would like to protect it as a greenway, including a possible trail connecting key wetlands areas in Rutland Township, forest preserves and city parks.

## Other Creeks

There are many other valuable streams throughout Kane County that should also be protected as greenways through development restrictions or land acquisition. These include: Big Rock Creek, Bowes Creek, Brewster Creek, Lake Run Creek, Norton Creek, Stony Creek, Waubensee Creek, and Welch Creek.

## Community Trail Systems

Kane County municipalities have played, and will continue to play, an important role in helping to complete and extend the county's major regional trail system. Increasingly, they are also establishing greenways for natural resource protection. Inter-municipal cooperation has been crucial to greenway/trail continuity. Continued and enhanced cooperation will only be more important as Kane County develops. These municipal efforts are particularly important since many of the communities extend east into Cook and Dupage counties. Because of their location, Fox River Valley towns can provide a vital link between forest preserve district greenways and trails that otherwise would end at county borders.

Communities involved in greenway and trail planning include:

- ☐ Batavia
- ☐ Elgin
- ☐ Fox Valley Park District communities (Aurora, N. Aurora, Montgomery)
- ☐ Geneva
- ☐ Gilberts
- ☐ Lily Lake
- ☐ St. Charles
- ☐ Sleepy Hollow

## LAKE COUNTY

Lake County is rich in wetlands, rivers and streams. In part to protect these resources, the Lake County Forest Preserve District (LCFPD) developed and approved a greenways concept plan in 1989. Its primary goals were to: (1) link major public open space and natural resources; (2) create connections to other counties; (3) follow natural resource corridors; and (4) explore alternative linkages (e.g., utility rights-of-way) if no natural corridors exist. After presenting the concept plan to local municipalities, the Forest Preserve District developed its "Proposed Regional Greenway and Trails System."

### Greenway Needs: Highlights

1. Develop 180 miles of primary trails throughout the county.
2. Develop more greenways and trails in the central and western sections of the county (e.g., Wauconda to Round Lake north-south connection).
3. Create an east-west connection(s) (e.g., between Libertyville and Wauconda) to the major north-south greenway system (Des Plaines River Trail and North Shore Bikepath).
4. Create connection across Fox River to McHenry County trail system (i.e., Prairie Trail).
5. Develop more municipal trail systems to connect with - and create new connections between - the county-wide trail system.

## PRIORITY GREENWAYS

*(Numbers listed after each greenway refer to the map key.)*

**Chicago River (Middle Fork, Skokie River, West Branch)**

**Middle Fork [ 72 ]**

(North Branch of the Chicago River) Several key parcels along the Middle Fork already are publicly-owned, such as the Middlefork Savanna. LCFPD, local governments, and the Lake Forest Open Lands Association would like to see the remainder protected as a greenway.

**Skokie River [ 73 ]**

(Chicago River, North Branch). The Lake County sections of the Skokie River are primarily privately owned and could be protected as a greenway with the use of conservation easements or other similar techniques, where feasible.

**West Fork [ 74 ]**

(Chicago River, North Branch). Extending north from a FPDCC preserve through residential areas, the West Fork could be protected as a greenway, where feasible, in Lake County as well.

**Des Plaines River [ 76 ]**

Eighty percent of the river edge is already publicly-owned as a greenway. Sixteen miles of trails are complete from Russell Road to Gurnee and Libertyville to Lincolnshire. LCFPD eventually intends to complete a 49-mile trail system along the entire river corridor.

**Fox River [ 79 ]**

A small portion of the Fox River flows through Lake County. Recent acquisitions will help to protect the northern Fox River and provide Lake County residents with better recreational access to the River.

**Green Bay Trail [ 80 ]**

The Trail is complete from Highland Park to Wilmette (Cook County). Linkages are needed to the North Shore Bikepath for a continuous north-south system.

**Lake Michigan Shoreline [ 82 ]**

With the exception of local parks and the Illinois Beach State Park, most of the Lake Michigan shoreline in Lake County has been developed by private landowners. Preservation of undeveloped areas along the lakefront for public access, such as Fort Sheridan, should be pursued wherever feasible.

**North Shore Bikepath [ 86 ]**

The path is owned by the Lake County Division of Transportation. Seventeen miles of trail exist; the plan is to increase it to 27 miles. The North Shore Bikepath will connect to the Kenosha County (Wisconsin) Bike Path, Green Bay Trail, Des Plaines River Trail (east-west spur), and Illinois Beach State Park when complete.

**West Lake County Loop Trail [ 89 ]**

There is a strong need for better east-west linkages to give central and western Lake County residents ready access to Lake County's Des Plaines and North Shore trail systems. A greenway and trail loop should be developed utilizing the east-west spur of the North Shore Bikepath to Wauconda, selected Commonwealth Edison rights-of-way, a proposed trail along Peterson Rd. between Route 45 and Route 60, the proposed greenway along Mill Creek, as well as other greenway lands and connections, such as to Volo Bog, as appropriate.



## OTHER POTENTIAL GREENWAYS

*(Numbers listed after each greenway refer to the map key.)*

### Buffalo Creek [ 71 ]

Protected as a greenway along Buffalo Creek Forest Preserve, LCFPD and the Village of Long Grove would like to see this entire stream corridor preserved as a greenway.

### Commonwealth Edison Rights-of-Way [ 75 ]

A number of Commonwealth Edison utility rights-of-way cross the county, and the east-west corridors, in particular, could provide critical trail linkage where no other option exists between areas like Libertyville and Wauconda, and provide a greenway outlet to the Fox River. LCFPD currently has an agreement with Commonwealth Edison for use of several of its rights-of-way.

### EJ&E Railroad [ 77 ]

Although the EJ&E is identified as an official “corridor of the future” in the 2010 Transportation System Development Plan, a portion of this railroad corridor, which is currently lightly-used, could be used to create a trail connection between northwest Cook County and the North Shore Bikepath. It could be developed as a trail corridor only or in joint use with other commuter or freight railroad uses.

### Flint Creek [ 78 ]

Portions of Flint Creek already are protected as a greenway through land owned by the LCFPD and a Barrington-based private conservation organization, Citizens for Conservation (CFC). CFC would like to see a greenway along the

entire length of Flint Creek up to its confluence with the Fox River.

### Indian Creek [ 81 ]

Substantial portions of Indian Creek (a tributary of the Des Plaines River also called Kildeer Creek) in Long Grove have been set aside as open space. With additional parcels, the entire waterway could be preserved as a greenway.

### Metra Rail Right-of-Way [ 83 ]

The northwest segment of this Metra commuter rail corridor could provide a trail linkage running northwest from the Fox Lake area toward McHenry County.

### Mill Creek [ 84 ]

This is a high-quality stream which runs south and east to the Des Plaines River. Significant residential developments are planned near the stream.

### Mutton Creek [ 85 ]

A greenway along this stream could create a connection between the Lake County Museum to the Volo Bog area if the West Lake County Loop Trail is developed.

### Oak Prairie Reserve Trail System [ 87 ]

A planned system of trails running through the Oak Prairie Reserve and Almond Marsh properties could eventually be linked with LCFPD’s Brae Loch golf course and Rollins Savanna Preserve.

### Route 53 (Proposed I-355 extension) Bike Trail [ 88 ]

Route 53 is being proposed for extension north into Lake County. If this new highway is built, the Corridor Planning Council for Central Lake County, a

coalition of municipal governments, would like to see a bike path considered as part of the design for the corridor paralleling the roadway. This would provide a key north-south trail connection in the center of the county.

## Community Trail Systems

A number of municipalities throughout the county have developed or are planning bike and pedestrian trail systems within their boundaries. Many of these village bike/pedestrian paths are designed to connect residential areas with parks and recreation centers, libraries, schools and other public buildings. Often, they also connect to existing regional trails (e.g., the North Shore Bikepath).

These communities include:

- |                                        |                                          |
|----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Barrington    | <input type="checkbox"/> Lincolnshire    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Buffalo Grove | <input type="checkbox"/> Long Grove      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Deerfield     | <input type="checkbox"/> Mundelein       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grayslake     | <input type="checkbox"/> Round Lake area |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Green Oaks    | <input type="checkbox"/> Riverwoods      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gurnee        | <input type="checkbox"/> Vernon Hills    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Highland Park | <input type="checkbox"/> Wauconda        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lake Bluff    | <input type="checkbox"/> Waukegan        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lake Forest   | <input type="checkbox"/> Winthrop Harbor |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lake Zurich   | <input type="checkbox"/> Zion            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Libertyville  |                                          |

## MCHENRY COUNTY

The McHenry County Conservation District (MCCD) board recently adopted a County Open Space and Trail Plan. The Trail Plan was also formally adopted by the separate McHenry County Board in fall 1991. The Plan focuses on trail corridors along abandoned or lightly-used railroad corridors, and recommends protection of key “biological corridors” as greenways, particularly those along rivers and streams.

### Greenway Needs: Highlights

1. Protect stream aquatic quality, reducing pollution runoff and sedimentation to prevent problems downstream.
2. Preserve not only greenway strips along streambanks, but also adjacent uplands for better wildlife (plant and animal) management.
3. Create east-west trail connections to Fox River, Moraine Hills State Park, and Chain-o-Lakes area.
4. Make significant use of conservation easements (to supplement fee simple purchase) to protect long riparian corridors.

## PRIORITY GREENWAYS

*(Numbers listed after each greenway refer to the map key.)*

### Fox River [ 96 ]

Although already heavily developed along many stretches, the Fox River is still one of McHenry County’s most important natural resources. Efforts to protect the river as a greenway and to enhance opportunities for public recreation along the River should be pursued.

### Kishwaukee River [ 99 ]

Relatively undeveloped and mainly surrounded by farmland, the Kishwaukee is one of only three streams in northeastern Illinois rated “A” for its high quality aquatic value. Initially, MCCD is concentrating on protecting the South Branch of the Kishwaukee.

### Nippersink Creek [ 101 ]

Second of three “A” ranked streams in the region, the Nippersink is a scenic stream with high-quality wildlife habitat. Three public canoe launch areas owned by MCCD and Spring Grove allow use of the Nippersink as a canoe trail.

### Prairie Trail [ 103 ]

MCCD recently purchased 13 miles of Chicago and Northwestern railroad right-of-way, forming a trail connection between Crystal Lake and McHenry. Two previous trail segments connected south to the Fox River Trail terminus near Crystal Lake, and a seven-mile northern section connected Ringwood to the Wisconsin border.

## OTHER POTENTIAL GREENWAYS

*(Numbers listed after each greenway refer to the map key.)*

### Boone Creek [ 90 ]

Boone Creek, flowing through the city of McHenry and into the Fox River, needs to be protected from pollution runoff and streambank erosion. The Boone Creek watershed is also a key priority according to the McHenry County Soil and Water Conservation Service.

### Chicago & Northwestern Railroad [ 91 ]

A portion of this C&NW right-of-way could be used to connect the Prairie Trail in Crystal Lake northwest through the county to Woodstock and Harvard. This trail could also connect with an existing 6-mile segment of Boone County’s Long Prairie Trail (will eventually extend across all of Boone County).

### Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul & Pacific Railroad [ 92 ]

Completing the connection along this rail line from Lake County, this section of the CMSP&P railroad could link the Chain-o-Lakes area to the Prairie Trail.

### Commonwealth Edison Rights-of-Way [ 93 ]

A number of Commonwealth Edison utility corridors could be used to connect, for example, Moraine Hills State Park east to Lake County, south to the Prairie Trail, and west to connect with the Chicago & Northwestern Railroad greenway. Other possible connections include an east-west link between the Kishwaukee River and the Chicago & Northwestern Railroad line.

### Coon Creek [ 94 ]

Running from far northwest Kane County through the southwest corner of McHenry County to its confluence with the Kishwaukee River, MCCD intends for this creek to be protected as a greenway.

### Cotton Creek [ 95 ]

A greenway could be established connecting MCCD’s Cotton Creek Marsh east along Cotton Creek east into Lake County where it could be linked with Mutton Creek.



## **The Hollows to Fox River Connection [ 97 ]**

Anchored by MCCD's The Hollows and Oakwood Hills Fen preserves, a greenway along Silver Creek could be established to connect these sites with the Fox River and Chicago & Northwestern Railroad greenway.

## **Huntley-Union-Marengo Trail [ 98 ]**

The continuation of a CN&W rail line from Kane County (which could form a connection to the Fox River Trail near Elgin), this trail corridor would connect three McHenry County towns, Huntley, Union, and Marengo. There is also a possibility of creating a connection between the H-U-M Trail and the Fox River.

## **Moraine Hills State Park Connection [ 100 ]**

Creating a connection between the Prairie Trail at Crystal Lake and McHenry east across the Fox River to Moraine Hills State Park and the Chain-o-Lakes area is a priority for the MCCD and these two communities. An existing Commonwealth Edison right-of-way may provide a trail connection.

## **Piscasaw Creek [ 102 ]**

Running from the far northwest corner of the county into Boone County where it joins the Kishwaukee River, this is a high quality stream which should be protected as a greenway.

## **Richmond to Hebron Trail [ 104 ]**

Connecting to the Prairie Trail at Richmond, this connection, improved for bicycling, could link two far north McHenry County towns, Richmond and Hebron.

## **Rush Creek [ 105 ]**

Running half the length of the county, and anchored by MCCD's Rush Creek Conservation Area near Harvard, this creek drains into the main stem of the Kishwaukee River at the McHenry-Boone County line.

## **Spring Creek [ 106 ]**

This high quality stream in far southeast McHenry County connects to FPDCC's Spring Lake preserve and should be protected as a greenway.

## **Community Trail Systems**

A number of local government units throughout the county have developed or are planning greenway and recreational trail systems that will link with those of MCCD. These communities include:

- ☐ Cary
- ☐ Crystal Lake
- ☐ Huntley
- ☐ Marengo
- ☐ McHenry
- ☐ McHenry Township Park District area communities (including McHenry, McCullom Lake, Johnsburg, and unincorporated areas)
- ☐ Woodstock

## WILL COUNTY

Will County is experiencing significant impacts on its natural resources as development increases in various areas. In 1989, the Forest Preserve District of Will County (FPDWC) identified 40,000 acres of open space which should be preserved. Since that time, it has established a preservation plan to acquire the most important parcels and has made substantial progress toward those goals. Many of these acquisitions are greenways along the county's most important rivers and tributary streams.

### Key Greenway Needs: Highlights

1. Expand existing holdings to enhance their long-term viability.
2. Acquire additional large sites of at least 100 acres.
3. Preserve unique natural areas.
4. Develop a linear trail system, with an emphasis on connections to other regional trails.

## PRIORITY GREENWAYS

*(Numbers listed after each greenway refer to the map key.)*

### Centennial Trail [ 107 ]

The longest section of the Centennial Trail lies in Will County. It provides a means to knit together the Old Plank Road Trail and local and state I&M Canal trails, and connects these trails to the regional system in Cook and DuPage counties.

### Chicago, St. Paul & Milwaukee Railroad [ 108 ]

(Joliet to Manhattan). This abandoned railroad could provide a 14-mile trail connection to central Will County which lacks recreational trails. It also forms the link between the trails and greenways

which converge near Joliet and the Norfolk Southern, Wabash Line.

### Des Plaines River [ 109 ]

The southern section of the Des Plaines River flows through Will County and sections will be protected as a greenway as part of the Centennial Trail corridor.

### DuPage River [ 110 ]

Some of the DuPage River's most scenic and undisturbed sections lie in Will County. However, these areas also are facing significant development pressure. Both the WCFPD and communities along the river would like to see the entire river treated as a continuous greenway. Some communities like Naperville and Bolingbrook have preserved substantial greenway areas.

### Illinois and Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor [ 114 ]

Several sections of the I & M Canal Trail are in place near Lemont and Lockport and will eventually be connected with the State I & M Canal Trail as it is extended north from Channahon to Joliet, and will then be linked to FPDWC's Centennial Trail.

### Kankakee River [ 116 ]

A scenic and high quality watershed with unique sand prairies and savannas, the Kankakee is framed at its northern end by the State Des Plaines Conservation Area, and along much of its length by FPDWC's Braidwood Dunes Preserve and, northwest of the city of Kankakee, Kankakee River State Park. The remaining, unprotected areas along the Kankakee River should be preserved as a greenway in Will County and Kankakee County.

**Old Plank Road Trail [ 119 ]**

This new 20-mile trail corridor runs along an abandoned Penn Central right-of-way and provides a key east-west trail connection. When complete, it could be linked with FPDCC's Thorn Creek greenway to the trails near Joliet, and form a southern anchor to the entire regional system.

**Thorn Creek [ 124 ]**

FPDWC's existing holdings along Thorn Creek (Thorn Creek Nature Preserve) anchor this greenway at its southern end and provide a continuous connection to Cook County's Thorn Creek greenway system as FPDCC extends their holdings south. FPDWC would like to add to its existing holdings to enhance its Thorn Creek greenway.

**OTHER POTENTIAL GREENWAYS**

*(Numbers listed after each greenway refer to the map key.)*

**EJ&E Railroad [ 111 ]**

Running from Aurora through the northeast corner of Kendall County to Joliet, an abandoned portion of the EJ&E railroad right-of-way could provide a vital link from the Virgil Gilman Trail in Kane County to the DuPage River near Plainfield if enough contiguous sections are available for acquisition.

**Forked Creek [ 112 ]**

A main tributary of the Kankakee River, Forked Creek runs through much of southern Will County and key sections should be protected as a greenway.

**Hickory Creek [ 113 ]**

A tributary of the Des Plaines River, Hickory Creek runs close to the Old Plank Road Trail and the multi-county Thorn Creek greenway at its eastern end. WCFPD already owns significant acreage along the Creek, including Hickory Creek and Van Horne Woods preserves.

**(Proposed extension of) I-355 Corridor [ 115 ]**

The proposed southern extension of I-355 from I-55 to I-80 would cross several important natural areas and consume significant amounts of open space. A trail system similar to the one being discussed for the northern extension (Highway 53 in Lake County) should be incorporated into IDOT's design for this road, so that a critical north-south trail connection through Lake, Cook, DuPage, and Will County to the Old Plank Road Trail might eventually be made if the highway is built.

**Lily Cache Creek [ 117 ]**

This high-quality tributary of the DuPage River provides important feeding grounds for the herons and other birds breeding at FPDWC's nearby Lake Renwick Preserve and should be protected as a greenway.

**Norfolk Western, Wabash Line [ 118 ]**

(Manhattan to Custer Park). This abandoned railroad line creates a critical 17-mile connection from the CMSP&P spur which runs southeast from Joliet to Manhattan. A trail along the Wabash Line would provide the only trail connection to the southern part of the county. Most important, it runs along the eastern boundary of the 27,000 acre Joliet Arsenal property, which the federal government has announced it will sell,



and easily could be connected to FPDWC's Braidwood Dunes Preserve and Kankakee River State Park.

### **Plum Creek [ 120 ]**

This creek in the farthest east corner of Will County is now almost entirely owned by FPDWC as a greenway and connects to FPDCC's Plum Creek greenway and the Indiana border.

### **Rock Run Creek [ 121 ]**

Development along this high quality stream has spread from Joliet and the DuPage River area. Protecting the Rock Run as a greenway is important because of the large wetlands complex it includes and because the I&M Canal crosses it south of Joliet.

### **Spring Brook [ 122 ]**

Significant portions of a greenway already are in place along this stream which connects DuPage County's Dragon Lake Forest Preserve and the DuPage River in Will County.

### **Spring Creek [ 123 ]**

A tributary of Hickory Creek and the Des Plaines River, Spring Creek is anchored by FPDWC's Lower Spring Creek Preserve and Messenger Woods, including substantial recent additions. This stream flows from a large Orland Park wetlands complex in Cook County and could create a continuous greenway connection from FPDCC's Palos Preserves (McGinnes Slough) through Will County to connect with the Centennial, I&M Canal, and Old Plank Road Trails.

## **Community Trail Systems**

A number of Will County local governments have played an active role in preserving greenways through land donation ordinances and development restrictions. Many have also actively pursued establishment of local and regional trail systems, including the several municipalities and townships that have contributed to developing the Old Plank Road Trail.

These municipalities include:

- ☐ Bolingbrook
- ☐ Channahon
- ☐ Frankfort
- ☐ Joliet
- ☐ Lemont
- ☐ Lockport
- ☐ Naperville
- ☐ New Lenox
- ☐ Park Forest
- ☐ Plainfield
- ☐ Shorewood
- ☐ University Park



# CHAPTER 5. PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

## IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITIES

Regional greenway priorities have been identified during the greenway planning process through consultation with local, regional and state agencies and with private sector representatives:

### 1. Strengthening Planning and Intergovernmental Coordination for Greenways

Successful greenway projects are the result of a detailed planning process that involves the many interests and jurisdictions affected by a particular greenway. Creating continuity of the regional greenway network will require coordination among these many interests. Planning procedures need to involve local, regional, state and federal participants. Only this way can coordination, sharing of information, plan implementation and greenway system management be achieved. Greenway planning needs to be integrated into comprehensive plans for land use, transportation, public services, and environmental management. Implementation of the Regional Greenways Plan will depend upon effective planning for each of the individual greenways in the Plan.

### 2. Expanding Funding and the Leveraging of Funds

The public agencies normally responsible for implementing large portions of the regional greenway have severely limited fiscal resources. There are no established programs to assist the planning of greenways. Greenway programs are even more constrained with tax caps in place that affect local governments' ability to purchase land. On a more positive note, state and federal funding for open space

and bikeways, while also limited, has been extremely influential in stimulating local commitments to greenway acquisition and development.

The availability of funding needs to be increased in order to stimulate implementation of the Plan. The effectiveness of available funds can be increased when they are used to (1) stimulate local public and private sector action, (2) encourage use of innovative preservation techniques such as conservation easements, (3) provide multiple benefit greenways (especially the multiple benefits achieved by including water resources within greenways) and (4) encourage intergovernmental cooperation in the planning and management of greenways.

### 3. Using New Approaches and Techniques

There is a need to explore additional ways of implementing a greenway network. For example, the use of existing and future road and transit rights-of-way needs to be given more consideration through cooperative efforts between the RTA, IDOT and greenway and trail planners. This is important in view of the requirements of the Clean Air Act requiring reductions in single-occupancy vehicle use by employees and the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) which provides funding for enhancements related to transportation facilities. Similarly, Operation GreenLight, sponsored by IDOT, offers potential for using trails in greenways as one technique for alleviating traffic congestion. In addition, existing and emerging programs for county stormwater management and nonpoint source pollution control offer potentials for achieving greenway objectives. Mechanisms need to be created to bring greenway



planners and other planners together in order to make these various programs mutually supportive.

Also, utility and railroad rights-of-way should be considered for their ability to create greenway linkages. New relationships between open space planners, transportation and environmental planners and utility and railroad officials are needed in order to maximize greenway opportunities.

Local governments can be extremely effective in preserving and managing greenways through their planning and community development programs. Enforcement of local ordinances for subdivision regulation and zoning, floodplain protection, stormwater management as well as stream and wetland protection can achieve many greenway benefits without requiring public acquisition. While most local governments have adopted floodplain regulations, other protective ordinances are less likely to be in place. Many communities have budget constraints which limit their ordinance enforcement capabilities.

Increasing attention is being given to the use of conservation easements through which public agencies, private landowners, and conservation organizations create development restrictions on land short of actual fee simple acquisition to protect greenway resources. Another innovative option is to allow certain kinds of restricted development that can co-exist compatibly with the greenway.

### **4. Connecting Local Greenways to the Regional Network**

Many municipalities and park districts are planning local greenway, trail and bikeway systems that have

the potential for linking to the regional greenway network and potentially to the national trail system. Special coordination should be undertaken to encourage local regional greenway connections with a funding priority given to projects that achieve such linkage.

### **5. Increasing Stewardship of Greenway Resources**

Effective greenway implementation and management very often require the dedicated involvement of citizens working within their communities. Northeastern Illinois has an exemplary stewardship movement but it could be expanded in a major way to support greenways. There is a need to improve coordination with environmental organizations, schools and other educational institutions to foster stewardship programs directed toward greenways. Stewardship fosters appreciation of a good environment and develops a sense of responsibility for the quality of the environment.

### **6. Improving Public Education**

There is a great need for public education regarding the benefits of greenways and the techniques that are available for designing them to be compatible within virtually any land use context. There should be a guidebook which provides sources, standards, and technical assistance to greenway implementors. A traveling exhibit, a video, and other materials would be useful in educating the public regarding greenways. Cooperation with educational institutions in the development of educational materials would be a beneficial approach.

# ACTION RECOMMENDATIONS

## Immediate Actions:

1. NIPC and Openlands should facilitate the creation of a region-wide greenway coordination mechanism which is based upon county-level action committees involving county, municipal, park district, other interested jurisdictions, as well as interested private organizations and citizens. County-level committees will also be used to bring region-wide implementation issues to ROSTAC for discussion, coordination and/or resolution.

A ROSTAC subcommittee should be created in order to develop detailed recommendations for the region-wide coordination structure and to address immediate implementation concerns such as utilization of funds available through the Inter-Modal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA).

2. Development of a greenway handbook by NIPC and Openlands, in conjunction with other interested parties, tailored to the needs of local governments and private landowners in northeastern Illinois. Such a handbook should be developed as soon as possible to address such concerns on planning procedures, acquisition techniques, design standards, and sources of assistance.

3. Participation by NIPC and Openlands in the development of a traveling greenway exhibit in conjunction with the Chicago Academy of Sciences.

4. Development by NIPC of a program, in conjunction with transportation planning agencies, for coordinating the implementation of the Regional Greenways Plan with the region's adopted long-range transportation plan, other aspects of regional transportation planning and air quality management planning.

5. The staff of NIPC and Openlands should meet with the stormwater management planning agencies to identify specific actions that will assist the implementation of the Greenways Plan as well as stormwater management plans.

6. Production of a video on greenways with accompanying educational materials.

7. Presentation of the Plan by NIPC and Openlands to area governments, community groups, Councils of Governments, open space jurisdictions and farm groups to seek acceptance of the Plan and initiate implementation actions at the local level.

8. Initiation of activities by NIPC and Openlands in conjunction with IDOT, Illinois State Toll Highway Authority, Councils of Mayors, and other transportation agencies concerning coordinated greenway transportation planning, landscaping and other related matters.

9. Convening of a conservation easement seminar by Openlands and others to pro-

vide technical assistance to open space agencies and land owners.

10. Convening, on a sub-area basis, implementation agencies and organizations, including utility companies, to develop strategies and programs for implementing the Plan in sub-areas of the region.

11. Initiate contacts with greenway and trail planners in adjacent states and counties in order to encourage the development of connections between northeastern Illinois and other areas.

12. Completion of lakefront park planning by the Chicago Park District in conjunction with the City of Chicago, concerned state and federal agencies, and neighborhood and civic organizations.

13. Complete Chicago River and Chicago park studies that have been

initiated by the Friends of the Chicago River, Army Corps of Engineers, National Park Services, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Forest Service. Use these studies to guide further regional and local planning activities.

14. Development of a public education initiative for greenways directed toward teachers and school children.

15. Commission a regional greenways and trail study for northeastern Illinois regarding public acceptance, use and security issues.

16. Encourage Soil and Water Conservation Districts to use the Regional Greenways Plan in their reviews of proposed development projects.



# IMPLEMENTATION RECOMMENDATIONS

## LOCAL AND COUNTY GOVERNMENTS

### Planning:

1. Municipalities, park districts, and counties should adopt the Regional Greenways Plan.
2. Municipalities, park districts, and counties should cooperatively develop coordinated land use and greenway/open space plans.
3. Local comprehensive and land use plans should contain a greenway/open space element coordinated with the Regional Greenways Plan.
4. Local and county jurisdictions should work cooperatively with other jurisdictions and citizen groups to develop detailed plans for individual greenways. Local jurisdictions should enter into cooperative intergovernmental and public-private sector agreements regarding greenway location, development, management and finance.
5. All jurisdictions responsible for preparing plans for managing nonpoint sources of water pollution should consider and recommend the use of greenways to improve water quality wherever feasible.

6. Local governments should examine their own programs for capital improvements and infrastructure development to determine where implementation of greenways can be facilitated; and conflicts with planned greenways, avoided.

### Acquisition and Development:

1. All open space jurisdictions should give a high priority to implementing the Regional Greenways Plan.
2. Counties and municipalities should encourage dedications of open space and the granting of conservation easements within greenways included in local and regional plans.
3. Local and county jurisdictions should increase their use of available implementation techniques, especially conservation easements, developer donations, and development regulations, and should participate in programs to test and demonstrate innovative techniques such as mitigation banking and land banking, stormwater management planning, cluster development, and land treatment of wastewater.
4. County and local jurisdictions should utilize state snowmobile program funds for the development of appropriate snowmobile trails in a manner consistent with good management practice for greenways.

## Management Programs:

1. Greenway owners and managers should cooperate to develop consistent and mutually supportive standards and operating procedures for greenways.
2. Floodplain regulations, now widely adopted, should be fully enforced by municipalities. Preferably such regulations should limit floodplains to open space uses and should not allow alteration of the existing floodways; at a minimum, no development should be permitted within the floodway.
3. Counties and municipalities should adopt regulations that implement standards and procedures recommended in the NIPC model ordinances for floodplain protection, stream and wetland protection, stormwater management, soil erosion and sediment control.
4. Counties and municipalities should require that landowners and developers follow best management practices to limit nonpoint sources of water pollution.
5. County and municipal regulations and guidelines should be reviewed and modified as necessary to encourage the use of native plant materials in greenways.

## Technical Assistance and Public Information:

1. Municipal and county governments should work with citizens and property owners to develop support for greenways and to carry out the planning necessary to prevent any conflict between greenways and adjacent land uses.

## REGIONAL AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

### Coordination:

1. Establish a regional greenway coordination mechanism, such as a Northeastern Illinois Greenway Council, possibly as a committee of the Recreation and Open Space Technical Advisory Committee.
2. The Illinois Prairie Trail Authority should actively support the development of the regional greenway network through intergovernmental coordination, public information and education, and legislative initiatives.
3. Stormwater management programs should be developed in all counties, and such programs should include goals and objectives for using greenways as part of the stormwater management process.
4. Metra, the Chicago Transit Authority, and owners of railroad rights-of-way should participate in programs to allow for joint use of rights-of-way for greenway and trail functions.
5. Joint use of right-of-way for greenways and transportation (roadway and transit) and utility purposes should be undertaken in a manner that ensures the safety of greenway users, maintains the current and future operational integrity of the transportation or utility use, and ensures the continued maintenance of a high quality greenway corridor.

6. Regional open space organizations should develop trail maps and guides in order to make the public aware of greenway-related recreational opportunities.

### **Plan and Program Development:**

1. NIPC should develop a regional bicycle plan as part of the process for developing and adopting a new regional transportation plan.

2. NIPC and Openlands, working with counties and communities, should cooperate in a program to evaluate the feasibility of landbanking and other programs to facilitate the appropriate planning and development of vacant, under-used, tax-delinquent and surplus government property for greenway purposes.

### **Technical Assistance and Public Information**

1. NIPC, Openlands Project and open space jurisdictions should cooperate to sponsor greenway demonstration projects and develop educational materials in support of the Regional Greenways Plan.

2. Openlands Project should aggressively support neighborhood and community-based greenway projects in city and suburban locations.

3. NIPC should develop a model local ordinance encouraging the use of native plant materials in the landscaping of greenway corridors.

4. NIPC, in cooperation with other agencies and jurisdictions, should assess the liability issue and work through ROS-TAC to develop recommendations for remedies that may be needed.

## **FEDERAL AND STATE GOVERNMENT**

### **Funding and Program Development:**

1. Federal and state funding in support of greenway preservation, development and maintenance should be increased.

Support could come from increased and then stabilized funding through the existing Land and Water Conservation Fund (LAWCON), Urban Park and Recreation Recovery Program (UPARR) and bike-way programs, or through additional programs specifically aimed at greenway preservation and development.

2. The State of Illinois should provide incentives for comprehensive planning at the local level with attention to greenway issues as an essential component of that planning.

3. The State of Illinois should create an aggressive, comprehensive state greenway and trails program that can provide increased levels of technical assistance, protection of resources of statewide importance and increased funding for greenway acquisition and development. If current resources are inadequate to support increased state involvement, new sources of support, such as a special bond issue for acquisition and development, should be explored. Such funding should be distributed state-wide on a per capita basis.

4. The Illinois Department of Conservation should give a high priority to supporting projects that implement the Regional Greenways Plan.

5. Through the Illinois Department of Conservation, sponsor stream access pilot projects with private landowners, as well as demonstration projects for greenway development and management (for example, streambank stabilization and stream restoration).

6. Through the Illinois Department of Transportation, utilize existing federal and state transportation programs (e.g. ISTEA and Operation GreenLight) for implementation of the Greenways Plan for specific greenway segments which can serve transportation functions.

7. The State of Illinois should provide financial support to regional planning agencies so that greenway and open space planning can be pursued and coordinated with other regional planning activities.

8. The State of Illinois should cooperate with other units of government to evaluate the feasibility of using a range of financing techniques that will create a funding base for greenway acquisition and development.

### **Coordination:**

1. The Regional Greenways Plan should serve as a key coordination and action document used by state and federal agencies in their planning, capital investment programming, property acquisition and management, grant programs, and permitting/regulatory programs. State and federal agencies should take direct action to adopt the Plan as a guide to these actions.

2. Relevant federal and state agencies should coordinate their respective programs in support of greenway preservation through a new coordinating struc-

ture, participation on ROSTAC, or other means.

3. Through the Governor's office, create an interdepartmental coordination mechanism that addresses the issues of greenway preservation and development.

4. The Governor of Illinois should, by executive order, direct all state agencies to submit notice on pending state actions to designated metropolitan clearinghouses when such actions may significantly affect greenways identified in the Regional Greenways Plan.

5. Utilize the Conservation Congress sponsored by the Department of Conservation as a means for addressing greenway planning and coordination issues.

6. The State of Illinois should develop a consolidated state permitting process for developments of regional impact and for developments affecting geographic areas of regional concern. Consolidated permit applications should be subject to notification and review through both the state and metropolitan clearinghouses. Greenways designated in the Regional Greenways Plan should be considered to be "geographic areas of regional concern".

7. The Illinois Department of Transportation should consider methods for the preservation and eventual development of transportation rights-of-way in a manner that will accommodate greenway and trail activities.

### **Legislative and Procedural:**

1. Modify the operating rules of the Illinois Department of Transportation / Division of Water Resources to provide



increased protection against stream channelization that now occurs through amendments of mapped floodways; or alternatively, establish a new regulatory program to accomplish stream protection in northeastern Illinois.

2. Procedures governing railroad abandonments and the dismantling of railroad bridges should be modified so that rights-of-way and bridges are not lost before due consideration can be given to their acquisition and use by public bodies for greenways.

3. The Illinois legislature should amend legislation limiting the ability of local and county jurisdictions to acquire and develop greenways and trails so that the process is no more restrictive than that which normally exists for open space acquisition.

## PRIVATE SECTOR ORGANIZATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS

### Stewardship:

1. Private conservation organizations should increase their efforts to encourage citizens to participate in monitoring greenway conditions and to assist in the maintenance and management of greenways.

2. Private landowners should, where appropriate, establish and maintain greenway corridors on their property, incorporating stream corridors, wetlands, other sensitive natural features and providing access to publicly owned greenways.

3. Citizens and landowners should participate in stewardship programs to monitor greenway conditions and to assist in greenway management.

4. Philanthropic organizations concerned about environmental quality should support public and private efforts to preserve greenways and improve public education with respect to greenways.

5. Corporations should consider corporate sponsorships of greenway and trail segments.

### Land Development:

1. Greenway organizations should work with the development industry to undertake demonstration projects that include well-planned greenways which will enhance the marketability of the real estate development product.

2. The nursery industry and landscape designers should work with greenway planners, property owners and developers to encourage the use of native plant materials in the creation and restoration of greenways.

### Land Acquisitions and Dedications:

1. Private land owners should consider granting conservation easements for greenways to an appropriate public jurisdiction or a private organization such as CorLands, The Nature Conservancy or one of several locally-based land trusts.

2. Wherever possible, private landowners should donate greenway segments to greenway management agencies or organizations.

## IMPLEMENTATION COSTS

In general terms, the Regional Greenways Opportunities Map identifies approximately 1000 miles of greenways, 650 miles of which are not currently in public ownership or in some form of private permanent open space. The Plan does not attempt to identify the detailed “specifications” of each greenway, including such factors as desirable width, nature and location of access, type of facilities, landscaping or use. The implementation of each greenway will require a detailed planning process through which the appropriate mix of land acquisition design standards and other implementation techniques will be determined.

At the present time, open space agencies are experiencing wide variations in the costs of land depending on locations and development factors. Such costs range from less than \$2,000 per acre to more than \$30,000 per acre for prime parcels. A greenway 100 feet wide and one mile long consists of 12.1 acres. While the relative narrowness of greenways reduces the amount of land required, acquisition of narrow linear segments of parcels can be relatively complex and costly on a per acre basis as compared to the acquisition of entire parcels con-

taining more land than actually needed for greenway use. Where greenways involve land with inherent development limitations, such as floodplains, costs are reduced.

Development activities in greenways also vary widely depending on the type of facilities required. A multi-purpose limestone path can cost \$70,000 per mile while an eight foot wide paved bicycle trail would cost considerably more.

Therefore, it is difficult to estimate and quantify the costs of implementing the Regional Greenways Plan. Given its long range nature, costs of implementation can be expected to increase over time. With land values rising (aggravated by continuing suburban sprawl), delayed implementation will add greatly to the cost. Moreover, the many other variables affecting cost can be expected to change. The use of regulatory measures, conservation easements, bargain sales and donations can all help reduce costs. The greater the participation of private landowners in greenway preservation, the lower will be the cost to public jurisdictions. It can be assumed, however, that wherever any significant degree of public access is to be provided, public ownership will be required.

## CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION

The northeastern Illinois region will be challenged to complete the greenway vision that began in Chicago and Cook County. The scarcity of financial resources, especially in mature and distressed communities, coupled with jurisdictional complexities and weak environmental management, make plan implementation a difficult task. While most people readily recognize the importance and value of parks and forest preserves, it is more difficult for people to visualize what a greenway can mean to a community and what the true benefits of a linked system are. We have become accustomed to the fact that so much of the natural environment has been lost and so much of the built environment is unattractive and poorly maintained.

On the positive side, there is increasing awareness of the need for improving the region's environment and managing resources more effectively. There are more and more good examples of greenways throughout the nation and in northeastern Illinois, such as along the Fox River. The link between a high quality environment and the ability to attract and maintain investment in communities is recognized by people outside of the "environmental community".

In addition, there is increasing experience in developing cooperative intergovernmental programs, something that is essential to greenway preservation in northeastern Illinois. Also, managers of governmental programs are becoming more accustomed to

accommodating multiple objectives within their assigned scope of activities. And there are expanded opportunities for integrating greenways, transportation systems, and stormwater management.

While not all greenways will have complete public access, the development of trails has caused resistance from private landowners not wanting to lose portions of their land through the condemnation process and disliking the prospects of an increased presence by the public. While public agencies must be allowed to pursue their important authorized purposes and functions, it is also incumbent upon the public sector to be sensitive to potential adverse impacts on private property and to pursue planning procedures that encourage wide participation.

To facilitate this, there must be greater public awareness of the benefits of well-planned greenways and trails as well as greater public and private commitment to carrying out detailed, participatory planning.

This plan is only a beginning, suggesting a basic regional framework and recommendations for action. It is the hope of NIPC and Openlands Project that it can serve as an effective organizing tool for region-wide public and private sector greenway activities. The Plan should be revisited and updated as appropriate within five years. By that time there should have been major progress in completing the vision.





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# APPENDICES

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**Map of Greenway Opportunities  
& Executive Summary.....Insert**

The Map of Greenway Opportunities illustrates most of the greenways described in Chapter 4. The purpose of the map is to delineate the locations of existing and potential greenways that would form the basic greenway framework for the region. The map is generalized and is not intended to represent precise routes, design widths or other aspects that are part of detailed, local greenway design and implementation.

The map also illustrates existing and proposed trails which complement the regional greenway network. Proposed trails have been identified by public jurisdictions that have participated in the greenway planning process. The proposed trail locations are generalized and design characteristics, alignments, and use are subject to detailed local planning.

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# GLOSSARY

## **BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES (BMPS's)**

a general term for effective natural resource management practices accepted and promulgated by resource management agencies. BMP's are often identified for the purposes of managing stormwater, soil erosion and sedimentation, and nonpoint source pollution.

**BIODIVERSITY** a measure of the variety of plant and animal species in a given area. Areas that are healthier ecologically usually are richer in species and support more "biodiversity."

**BIO-RESERVE** nature preserves, greenways and macro-sites managed to preserve habitat and biodiversity; bio-reserves usually contain a core reserve area and surrounding buffer areas to protect against adverse impacts.

**CONSERVATION EASEMENT** a right or interest in land acquired by a public or private entity for purposes of limiting development and protecting resources.

**ENVIRONMENTAL FRAGMENTATION** the breaking up of larger habitat areas into smaller, discontinuous areas in which plant and animal species become isolated and have greater difficulty in being self-sustaining; caused by roads, urban development, stream channelization, and farming practices.

**FILTER STRIPS** vegetated areas along streams and adjacent to lakes and wetlands, preferably of native vegetation, that help protect water quality and habitat conditions by intercepting and absorbing non-point pollution.

**FLOODPLAIN** land adjacent to a body of water at or below the 100-year frequency flood elevation.

**FLOODWAY** that portion of the floodplain required to store and convey the base flood; the area outside the floodway is known as the flood fringe or floodway fringe.

**GREENWAY** linear open space preserved for resource management, recreation and/or aesthetic benefits.

**ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION (IDOC)** the agency of state government that maintains and develops state parks and memorials, administers grants to local units of governments for open space and bikeways, maintains the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, supports statewide conservation programs, and is responsible for developing a statewide trails plan.

**INTERMODAL SURFACE TRANSPORTATION EFFICIENCY ACT (ISTEA)** the new federal transportation act that funds transportation planning and services/facilities (including pedestrian, bikeway/trail, and public transportation) as well as projects identified as "enhancements."

**LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND (LAWCON)** federal open space acquisition and development program administered through the U.S. Department of Interior and the Illinois Department of Conservation.

**MACRO-SITES** large areas containing clusters of major open space and nature preserve sites where the creation of linkages and overall management strategies can help sustain the region's biodiversity; examples are the Palos area, northwest Cook County, and the Chain-O-Lakes area.

**NONPOINT SOURCE POLLUTION** water pollution that is not discharged into water bodies via a pipe, such as sediment and chemicals carried into streams via stormwater runoff.

**NORTHEASTERN ILLINOIS PLANNING COMMISSION (NIPC)** the official comprehensive regional planning agency for the six-county Chicago metropolitan area.

**OPEN SPACE LAND ACQUISITION AND DEVELOPMENT (OSLAD)** the State of Illinois open space acquisition and development program administered by the Illinois Department of Conservation.

**OPENLANDS PROJECT** a private, not-for-profit open space advocacy organization operating in the Chicago metropolitan area and additional counties containing the Fox River and the I & M Canal National Heritage Corridor.

**OPERATION GREENLIGHT** a multi-agency project, funded by the Illinois Department of Transportation, designed to reduce traffic congestion in the Chicago metropolitan area.

**ROSTAC** the Recreation and Open Space Technical Advisory Committee used by the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission and Openlands Project to guide regional open space and recreation planning and plan implementation.

**STRATEGIC REGIONAL ARTERIALS** a network of major arterial roadways designated in the 2010 Transportation System Development Plan and currently being studied by the Illinois Department of Transportation for their potential ability to carry increased traffic as an alternative to additional expressway construction.

**URBAN PARK AND RECREATION RECOVERY PROGRAM** a federal program (currently unfunded) for the rehabilitation of urban parks and open space; administered directly through the U.S. Department of Interior.

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# SOURCES OF INFORMATION & ASSISTANCE

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(312) 427-2943

Chicago Botanic Garden  
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Forest Preserve District of Will County  
22606 South Cherry Hill Road  
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I & M Canal National Heritage Corridor  
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15701 S. Independence Blvd.  
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Illinois Association of Park Districts  
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Illinois Department of Conservation  
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Springfield, Illinois 62701  
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Illinois Dept. of Energy and Natural Resources  
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Illinois Department of Transportation  
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Illinois Department of Transportation  
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Illinois Environmental Protection Agency  
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Openlands Project is an urban conservation organization that serves the nine-county region of northeastern Illinois. Openlands Project protects, expands, and enhances open space—lands and waters—to provide and improved environment and more livable place for the people of the region.

Having green open spaces for recreation and relaxation is critical to the quality of life in urban regions. In addition to its environmental and psychological value, high quality open space can help make Chicago competitive in attracting business and the qualified workers business needs.

Openlands Projects work is driven by the "21st Century Open Space Plan," a bold vision to advance the open space agenda for northeastern Illinois over the next 100 years. The Plan sets three goals:

1. Establish a regional network of over 1,000 miles of greenways, corridors of open land linking communities, parks, and forest preserves that typically follow the paths of waterways and railroads. The first step in realizing that goal is the development with the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission (NIPC) of the *Northeastern Illinois Regional Greenways Plan*.
2. Acquire large new parcels of land in outlying areas to expand existing parks and preserves and create new ones. Openlands' real estate affiliate, CorLands, can help to determine and implement a land preservation approach to protect these large parcels.
3. Create new parks, gardens, and playgrounds in the City of Chicago by working with community groups, the Park District, and city government to develop working models for neighborhood open space planning that can be applied in neighborhoods across the city. Openlands also coordinates a volunteer urban forestry program called TreeKeepers that teaches volunteers to plant and care for trees in the city.

Openlands initiates and achieves change through education, advocacy, technical assistance, and land acquisition. Over the past 30 years, Openlands has helped preserve over 20,000 acres of parkland, nature preserves, and trails for recreation and aesthetic appreciation.

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# NORTHEASTERN ILLINOIS REGIONAL GREENWAYS PLAN

*Map of Greenway Opportunities  
and Executive Summary*



DEVELOPED BY

THE NORTHEASTERN ILLINOIS PLANNING COMMISSION

AND OPENLANDS PROJECT



*With funding from*

*the Illinois Department of Conservation,*

*with additional support from*

*the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation*

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## An Executive Summary

Greenways differ in their location and function, but overall a greenway network will protect natural and cultural resources, provide recreational opportunities, and enhance the natural beauty and the quality of life in neighborhoods and communities.

More than just preserving land, greenways create and preserve continuity. Most greenways provide multiple benefits, making them a very cost-effective strategy for the use of public and private resources.

Greenways can reduce landscape maintenance costs through the use of natural landscaping, and reduce the expense of dredging waterways by trapping sediments before they reach them.

• HUCKLEBERRY CREEK [39]	• KATHLAMET RIVER [39]
• CASCADIAN TRAIL [29]	• LAKE MICHIGAN SHORES [6]
• CHICAGO TRAILS AND SYSTEM [1]	• MILL CREEK [67]
• CHUGACH RIVER [2, 3, 4]	• NIPERUCKIA CREEK [101]
• CHURCH ST. PAUL [5]	• NORTH SHOOT BAY PATH [86]
• MIDWINTER RAILROAD 500 ft.	• SHORELAND CREEK CANYON
to MANITOWISH [108]	• TONNISTON [17, 24]
• DES PLAINES RIVER [14]	• OLD PINE RIVER TRAIL [33]
• DUDMAN RIVER [42, 57]	• PUGNAC TRAIL [103]
• FOX RIVER [62]	• SALT CREEK [25]
• GRIFFIN BAY TRAIL [15]	• SHUTTERCOT CREEK CANYON
• ILLINOIS & MIDLAND CANAL	• CANTON TOWNS [35, 37]
NATHANIEL HORTON CORRIDOR [5]	• THOMAS CREEK TRAIL [70]
• ILL. JOHN DEERING PATH [32]	• WAGG GUYMAN TRAIL [70]
• KASKASKIA RIVER [116]	• WILLET LAKE CREEK & LOOP TRAIL [89]

Effective greenway implementation and management will require the dedicated involvement of citizens working within their communities. The need for education is great. Both the public and private sectors must learn the value of greenways and plan land use in ways compatible with protected, well-designed greenways.





THE NORTHEASTERN ILLINOIS PLANNING COMMISSION (NIPC) was created in 1957 by the Illinois General Assembly to be the advisory comprehensive planning agency for the six-county Chicago metropolitan area. The Northeastern Illinois Planning Act gave the Commission three charges: to conduct research and collect data for planning; to advise and assist local government; and to prepare comprehensive plans and policies to guide the development of the counties of Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry and Will.

OPENLANDS PROJECT is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to improving life in northeastern Illinois by increasing the amount and enhancing the quality of open space. Since its founding in 1963, Openlands Project has helped protect more than 20,000 acres of land.

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**northeastern illinois  
planning commission**

